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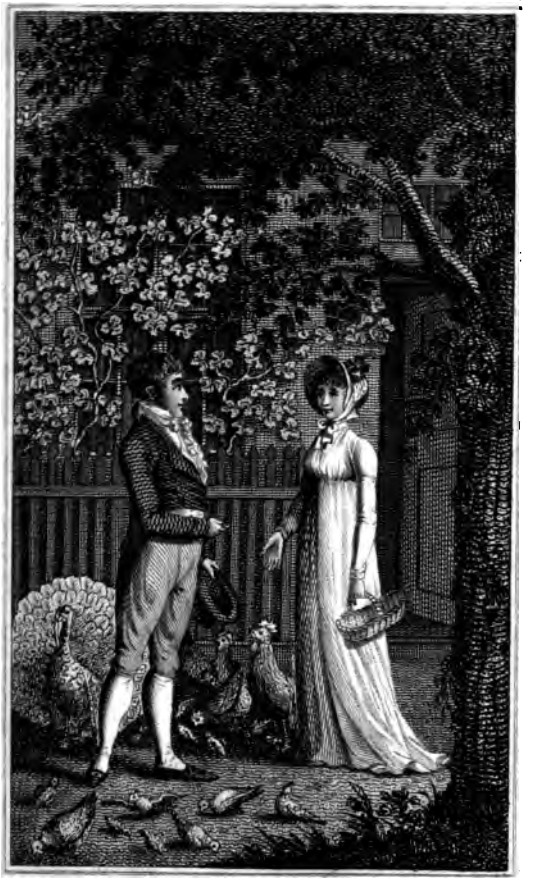

The Vicar's Daughter.

Henry Garden.
Priory

NOVELLETTES.

BY

AUGUSTUS VON KOTZEBUE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE

VICAR's DAUGHTER.

PART I.

In the gay capital of the young prince Caius or Sempronius, resided Charles Fernau, a man of a prepossessing figure, an honest heart, and of a superior understanding. Yet his character was not faultless. He had too much good sense, indeed, to be vain of his person; but he piqued himself on possessing a commendable pride, which he mistook for vanity, as its fruits were only the frivolous ambition of ostentatious display. Thus, he must have the finest horses, the most elegant furni-

ture, the most handsomely bound books, &c, &c, In short, his prominent foible was ostentation.

Arrived at his eight and twentieth year, and in possession of a genteel independence, he had for some time turned his thoughts to matrimony. His mother, who resided with him, was equally desirous that her son should be settled in life. Indeed, to see him married was the first wish of her heart. But though they were thus far agreed, the important point of the *choice* was not so easily settled. The mother, the widow of a privy counsellor, had much of that family pride which is almost inseparable from rank, and her taste and that of her son were unhappily discordant. She, intent only upon raising the consequence of her house, was chiefly ambitious of an alliance with rank and opulence. He, though he by no means affected to despise those advantages, and was still apparently undecided in his choice of a partner,

could not thoroughly persuade himself to resign the genuine feelings of nature, in obedience to maternal authority, or at the suggestions of vulgar ambition.

He had a friend, by the name of Welch, resident at Dresden, to whom he was accustomed to communicate every feeling of his heart. In this fluctuation of thought he addressed to him a letter, in which he unfolded, without reserve, the state of his mind.

"Dear Welch,

"The domestic felicity you so often describe to me in such lively colours, forms the most delightful picture of my solitary hours. Why do I postpone the enjoyment of such happiness? I think I hear you repeat the "Why?" Ah! my friend, many reasons, some of which appear insurmountable, have conspired to render this impracticable. Such is the vanity of man, that he is commonly ready to persuade himself that he is impelled to action simply by one great and laudable motive:

for such only he can avow without a blush; though at the same instant, perhaps, his conduct might have been influenced by a thousand subordinate considerations, but which he is ashamed to own even to himself.

"Thus it is with me. I live single because (at least that is the reason I chuse to acknowledge) I have seen no one who has appeared to me likely to ensure my happiness. But in truth this is not strictly the case. About a year and a half ago I became acquainted with a pretty girl, whom I engaged to accompany me to a ball. On waiting upon her at home, I found her dressed with simple elegance, and read in her lively eyes the pleasure she anticipated. As she was on the point of setting out, she received intelligence that her old aunt was seized with a head-ach, and thence unable to read to her father, who was blind. Upon this, she immediately turned to me, and said, with unaltered countenance, "I am truly sorry, sir, that you have had the

trouble of coming, since I am prevented from accompanying you. My father, who is blind, is accustomed to have either myself or my aunt to read to him every evening. I would by no means have him know how much I wished to have gone, for fear he should insist on it."

"I gave her a look, I believe almost of tenderness, and took leave in some confusion. "I should like to marry her," said I to my mother when I returned home. "Ah! child, she is not rich enough," was my answer.

"About four months ago, during a morning's walk, I chanced upon a lovely girl, the daughter of a gardener, employed in rocking a cradle with her foot, hearing her little brother read, and in tying up nosegays. I continued to gaze at her, though not unobserved; and beheld also the good nature and dexterity with which she acquitted herself. When the basket of flowers was ready she arose, and her father with a stern look counted them

over to her, fixing the price of each. She then left the house, and I followed her at a distance. She sold her flowers rapidly. Whenever a young man happened to be her customer she became grave and monosyllabic; but with women and men in years she was gay and talkative. An old officer, attracted perhaps by her appearance, bought some of her nosegays; and giving her more than she asked, she thanked him with a look expressive of lively gratitude. He was no sooner departed than she gave the overplus to a poor cripple, who was begging at a small distance. On her return home, she saw a poor peasant woman vainly trying to replace a load on her head, which she had set on the ground while she rested herself. Many persons had passed her by unnoticed; but the moment that my pretty gardener's daughter beheld the poor woman, she immediately took up her burthen, and having placed it on her head, went singing towards her home.

"I should like to marry her," said I to my mother on my return.

"Ah, child! she is too meanly born," was my answer. If I ventured to put in a *but*, she had twenty *buts* to bring against it; and as I was not actually in love with either the one or the other, I suffered the matter to die away.

"My mother on her part has proposed several to me. For example, a privy counsellor's daughter, who had spent a whole winter in Berlin, and had attended Schegel's lectures;—a rich merchant's daughter, who fingers the harpsichord to admiration, and is out of humour in every company where one is not found: who is dreadfully chagrined if she is not absolutely forced to play, and who having once complied, never knows when to leave off; a pretty lady of quality, who interrupts her mother every instant to inform her that she does not understand the subject upon which she would speak.

"Dear mother," said I, "one is too wise,

the other too affected, and the third too self-sufficient;" and as my mother had not set her heart upon any of them, she also declined any further mention of the subject. "Never mind," she sometimes says, "there are girls enough." *That* was once my opinion; but I am daily more and more convinced that the number of good ones is very small; particularly in the capital, where their only concern is, how they shall attract the men, how out-dress their acquaintance, and how monopolize the general gaze by the display of their charms: where bashfulness is nicknamed stupidity; where blushes are borrowed from the rouge box, and where modesty is supplied by the impure sentiments of voluptuous writings. No, my dear friend, in the capital I shall never look for a wife. The plant that is to blossom in the open air should not be raised in a hot-house.

"To continue the metaphor, I have frequently resolved on a botanical excursion, to explore the wild flowers of the country; which, though less gaudy to the eye, far

surpass the tulip or auricula in fragrance, and which often bloom and die unknown. But my mother is old and infirm, and could not endure to be left alone. And as she did not desert me when I was young and helpless, I willingly devote myself to her.

"Besides these, there are other reasons of less consequence, which tend to smother the flame that hymen would kindle in my bosom. My house is a small one. The only apartment adapted to my future wife, is occupied by my mother. Shall I turn her out? The direction of our little domestic economy is to her a source of pleasure. Shall I deprive her of the satisfaction of arranging every thing to her own taste? Shall she become dependent on the will of another, and perhaps consume the remnant of her days in sorrow or listlessness?"

Such were the thoughts and feelings of Fernau, and such they continued till his mother, a few years after, heaved her last sigh in his arms.

Left now to himself, he imperceptibly contracted a variety of bad habits;—he spent every evening at the Casino; read at meals; was indifferent whether his linen was whole or torn, and gave implicit credit to his housekeeper, who assured him that the price of provisions increased every week.

At length however it occurred to him that his mother's apartment was now unoccupied, and that his own heart was still more vacant. His dislike of city ladies was heightened into disgust by an anecdote he had lately heard of one of them—that she had sold the bed of a sick father, to enable herself to appear as the bride of Messina, at a private theatre. "Rather," said he, "will I fetch a wife from the coast of Barbary; for surely nothing can be more barbarous than female vanity!" But as the coast of Barbary was a long way off, he again resolved on the above-mentioned botanical ramble, for some lovely blossom with which to adorn his simple

dwelling. Week after week was fixed on for the intended excursion of discovery; sometimes he was prevented by bad weather; at other times he was engaged in a party of pleasure; and last of all, the old travelling coach proved to be in so ruinous a condition, as to be unfit for service. Besides, all the horses required to be shod. In short, had it not been for a mere accident, Fernau might in all probability have lived unmarried to this day.

In the place where Fernau lived, there resided a cotton-manufacturer, who, though not rich, was generally esteemed so. He had procured machines from England, which were generally admired, and which obtained for the possessor a portion of that credit exclusively due to the original inventors.

Mr. Holla, the name of the manufacturer, employed a hundred workmen, who were regularly paid every Saturday—with borrowed money indeed, though nobody was the wiser for *that*; not even the credi-

tors themselves: for what was privately paid to the one, was privately borrowed of the other. In this manner the credit of the manufacturer proceeded swimmingly for several years. He had lately purchased a fine estate of a nobleman, who, unable to resist the curiosity to be present at Buonaparte's coronation, had fooled away his inheritance that he might have the felicity of beholding the self-created emperor, with his new fangled court.

At this country seat, Mrs. Holla, who had been lately raised to the dignity of his spouse, wished to spend a few summer months with miss Hortensia, her daughter, who was sufficiently accomplished to sketch a landscape, and had moreover learnt the art of spouting from madame Bürger. Charles Fernau was earnestly pressed to be of the party. Yet how was this matter brought about? Very naturally: for the supposed flourishing state of Mr. Holla's manufactory being now at its *acmè*, he was generally spoken of as a

man of large property; and the mother, availing herself of their favour with the public, suddenly and very judiciously recollected that the Hollas and the Fernaus were distantly related. The pedigree was accordingly consulted, and the relationship confirmed. From this moment Fernau was uniformly stiled cousin; and it was always contrived that he should be of the party in every entertainment. After the death of his mother, Mrs. Holla and her daughter considered, that as their property was daily *de*creasing, and Hortensia's age daily *in*creasing, it would not be amiss to procure for themselves admittance to the vacant apartment of the old lady.

Another circumstance which rendered Fernau's company the more desirable was, the distance of their country seat from any sociable neighbourhood, and their consequent want of society: for, to be alone among the charms of nature—dreadful idea! With whom should mama

play at tarock? Who would there be to praise miss's drawings, or fall into extacies when she delivered a soliloquy from the Maid of Orleans? Vanity has not a more formidable enemy than solitude. It may solace itself awhile upon the recollection of the homage it has received, but reiterated homage can alone satisfy its voracious appetite.

Accordingly Fernau was invited, who after much deliberation, having promised to attend them, Hortensia immediately set about learning a piece out of Voss's Luisa, and another from Delille's Gardens. He declined however a place in the carriage, preferring the unrestrained enjoyment of nature's beauties, which he could obtain on horseback, to the contemplation of the beauty of Hortensia through a green veil, in a close conveyance.

The chief inducement with Fernau in accepting this invitation was, the hope that it might afford him an opportunity for the ramble so often postponed, and

which he was persuaded he should never undertake, however much he might desire it, unless stimulated by some external motive.

He accordingly mounted his poney, and rode on carelessly by the side of the carriage; nay, sometimes before and sometimes behind; from which unlucky circumstance, many of the dangerous glances shot from the amorous eyes of the lovely Hortensia, happened to miss their mark; and spent their needless force on the unimpassioned corn fields.

Towards evening, the party alighted at a little public house, where, for want of a better, they were obliged to take up their abode for the night. Fernau was by no means satisfied with the accommodations, and still less so with the affectation of his cousin. There were but two small bedrooms, and these separated only by a thin partition, with a door which could neither be locked nor bolted. Hortensia, of peerless delicacy, protested that nothing under

heaven could induce her to enter a bed, with the consciousness of a man being so so near. Fernau gave her the most solemn assurance that he would sacredly respect her innocence; at the same time representing to her, that as she was under the protection of her mother, it would be impossible for him to approach her, even if he wished it. But it was all in vain. If she were to be permitted (she said) to close her eyes for a moment, he must absolutely remove to a greater distance. This prohibitary mandate was however softened by glances too significant to be misunderstood. The result of the altercation was, that Fernau was obliged to withdraw for the night to a pallet of straw spread on the tap-room floor, in company with a snoring traveller of the lowest order.

The ladies intending to continue their journey at break of day, Fernau was requested by the blushing Hortensia to wake her in the morning by gently tapping at

the door. She conjured him in the name of the sisters of Lesbos not to open the door, or by peeping through the smallest crevice, to sully her immaculate purity. Having promised an exact obedience, he withdrew full of vexation and disgust.

After passing a miserable night, he rose in the morning much out of humour, and fully resolved to play his cousin some trick by way of revenge. By the time he had reached the door, his plan was formed; and though against his will, he felt that sort of cordiality towards the object of his vexation which such innocent jokes are calculated to inspire. According to previous agreement, he tapped gently at the door, then louder, and finally very loud. But as no bed-curtains were undrawn, no soft breathing to be heard, no melodious voice pronounced "Who's there?" and both mother and daughter appeared to sleep as if some one had been reading Göthe's "Confessions of a Good Heart"

to them, he ventured, in spite of his promise, to open the door a little; rightly conceiving, that if they set off late, they should not finish their journey that day. He now precipitately raised the latch, and finding a slight opposition from within, gave the door a gentle push with his knee.

Poor Fernau! little did he suspect that the unparalleled modesty of his lovely cousin, thinking it imprudent to rely on his bare word, had erected on the inside of the door a bulwark consisting of a three-legged table, upon which, with the help of her dear mama, she had placed a large old-fashioned arm chair. Thus defended from nocturnal intruders, she ventured with a safe conscience to extend her lovely limbs in the adjoining bed. But, alas! Fernau's clumsy knee forced the *tripod* table from its equilibrium; and one of the arms of the old chair in its way to the ground, encountering a certain utensil placed on a contiguous table, un-

happily emptied its briny contents over the blooming countenance of the sleeping Aurora.

Ye powers, what a salutation! what an exertion to open the lips closed by terror and rage—and what tones would have struck the affrighted Fernau, had not the expediency of guarding against the intrusion of any unwelcome fluid between those lips impeded all utterance. How should the hapless fair one now wipe from her face the yet trickling drops? Could she put forth from under the bed-clothes her snowy arm, which, unlike those of our good grandmothers of old, had no long shift-sleeve for its covering? Could she venture to expose even the smallest part of her throbbing bosom to the rude gaze of the bold intruder? In this dilemma she at length took the heroic resolution of uttering at all events the two little monosyllables "be gone!" taking care to accompany them with a look sufficiently formid-

able to drive our terrified hero to instantaneous flight.

No sooner was the lady relieved from every curious observer, than she carefully wiped off the mixture of rouge and pomatum which nightly combated the freckles, and the remains of the recent libation; and then rose from her watery couch, like Venus from the ocean. But the complacent smile which usually graced her countenance, was not yet at her command, when Fernau humbly offered to attend her to the carriage. The shower was over, but the clouds remained; and during the first four miles, where the road was sandy, she pouted and muttered from the coach window; but when Phœbus ascending higher, threatened to salute her warm cheek with his enlivening beams, the desire of escaping his ardent rays overcame that of tormenting the offender. She accordingly withdrew to a shady corner of the carriage; and on reaching the place

of their destination, she followed the prudent counsel of her good mother, and suffered the whole affair to sink into oblivion.

After passing a month at the country seat, this ill-assorted *trio* seemed to be unanimous in the wish for some incident, (should it even be an untoward one,) which might dissipate the horrible *ennui* with which they began to be oppressed. How could they dispose of that dreadful redundance of time which now lay upon their hands? Scandal, the universal time-killer for the fashionable and unfashionable inhabitants of great and small cities, could here but ill befriend them. In such situations they enjoyed the continual luxury of rending, tearing, mutilating, and belabouring the character of some less fortunate, or immaculate neighbour, whose real or supposed follies afforded endless matter for sage comments, pious lamentations, sarcastic apologies, and affected pity. But here in this lonesome

hamlet, no objects of this description presented themselves. They had already dissected the bodies of a few departed villagers; which however afforded but scanty food for their constitutional voraciousness. The most interesting topics which such subjects could furnish, were at best a case perhaps of water on the brain, or a few instances of odd and out-of-the-way ossifications. The charms of nature had now lost their power to fill up this dreary void. Every surrounding scene, every group of trees, and every silver stream which murmured through the meadows, had been sketched by the ready pencil of Hortensia. Every poet, and would-be poet, read and re-read; and all her favourite pieces rehearsed a thousand and a thousand times. Still, the attainment of their object seemed as remote as ever. Love, though hid in the inmost bosom, beams in radiant light through the eyes; like a gentle stream flowing silently beneath a grassy covering, proclaims its

hidden course by bedewing with glistening moisture the verdant surface. But Fernau's eye betrayed no such smothered fire. The flame, whose sparkling brightness was so anxiously looked for, was yet unkindled. The experienced glance of matronly penetration could detect nothing of that soft and languishing lustre which is at once the pride and the triumph of woman to behold.

"You may easily conceive," writes Fernau to his friend, "how rapidly we were verging to despair, when compelled to take refuge at church! a place where none found entertainment but myself. But I—yes, my friend, I must confess it, I had contemplations which to the no small vexation of my pretty cousin, made time glide away with an unusual rapidity. On the feast of Whitsuntide, which was now celebrating, the village church was decorated with branches and small bird-trees, an ornament which pleased me far

better than the heavy stone carvings in St. Peter's at Rome: for nature reminds us of the creator—art only of human vanity.

"My aunt, anxious as lady of the manor to be distinguished from the vulgar herd, took care by judicious delays, to go characteristically late; and by disturbing the rustic congregation with a due quantity of noise, to set them a proper example of devotion and piety!

"The minister gave us a look only to be felt by the innocent—for I alone stood abashed! His fervent prayer and melodious voice reminded me of my favourite Herder, and rivetted my attention. He spoke in so simple and affecting a manner as to shew clearly that he was under the influence of that spirit whose descent he was celebrating; but I confess with shame, I heard only the commencement of his sermon.

"As the stone once cast from the hand of the slinger is no longer under his control,

so is the glance once darted from the eye of beauty,—the consequences of both are incalculable!

"Happening to cast my eyes under the pulpit, I perceived through the branches of a sort of green arbour, (which appeared less ornamental than when I entered,) the outline of a straw hat! This phenomenon excited my curiosity, for I had no suspicion of there being a female in those parts likely to wear any such dress. Through the waving boughs I could also see that the said straw hat was gracefully tied down with a dark green ribbon. The next and most important thing was, to know what sort of physiognomy it concealed; and this methought would be as difficult to find out, as for Doctor Gall to discover the operations of the brain, through the well-disposed and carefully fixed head-dress of a modern fine lady.

"According to a known axiom of this famous man, we embrace objects only with *one* eye. In common cases it may

be so; but in the present, I certainly strained the organs of both mine to their utmost; and I am persuaded I should have done the same had I possessed a thousand. I will lay before you the result of the investigations I made. The object of my attention sat always in an attitude slightly bending; of course the hat concealed the whole of the face except the chin, which lay buried in the green bough, a branch of which, instead of ascending in a direct line, formed a gentle curve at the bottom of the face; whence I inferred, the *chin* must be round; an inference I naturally transferred also to the *cheeks*.

"The extremities of the little branches, instead of proceeding first from the stem in lines strictly horizontal, and then falling perpendicularly, formed a sort of parabolic curve; which, of course, gave to the bosom a figure finely arched.

"Having got thus far during the sermon, a hymn was begun. In the church was

hung up a black tablet, on which were written the numbers of the psalms in chalk; to see which, the young lady, (for I concluded she was so,) was obliged to remove a branch which obstructed her sight; and that she did with a hand, which, to my fancy, aided by the dark green leaves, appeared both finely turned and delicately white.

"Yet, to my great vexation, my view of the hand was far from being complete; for though the tablet was suspended, not as I wished, from the ceiling, still it hung high enough to compel her to raise her head, and—— Ah! my friend, what a blaze of celestial beauty! for the first time in my life I earnestly wished to have been a cypher—a real and proper cypher, chalked on the tablet by the village clerk; for I felt that no sign, whether it designated gold, or time, or a potentate, could have given me half the value which one look of her's would have bestowed.

"I beheld a large blue eye shaded by

deep eyelashes; a nearly aquiline nose; a mouth not too small, (for nothing can be uglier,) and the most voluptuously pouting lips! But, alas! only for a moment. The stupid clerk had written the numbers so large, that she had no occasion to look twice; and on the congregation she bestowed not a single glance. I hoped during the singing of the psalm to have been able to conclude my observations on the hand; but as ill luck would have it, she kept her book in her lap till she had found the psalm, and then laid it on a ledge before her. One great advantage I derived however from her devoutly joining in the hymn; namely, that she raised her head a full inch higher, and was compelled to display to me two rows of teeth, which in whiteness might justly vie with the pearly tear-drops of the sarcocolla. As she moved her lips, methought her voice struck my ear like the soft tones of a lute; but being mingled and confounded with the screaming of the fe-

male peasantry, I must confess I was unable to distinguish it with certainty.

"No matter how she sings, provided her voice be only pleasing when she speaks. With *me*, you know, that is a great point; I think a mellow voice is to the ear what a green colour is to the eye. I fancy I hear you observe, "You of course wish to speak with her?" Undoubtedly I do—I would most willingly converse with so enchanting a creature very often—every day, every hour, if possible. On my part there can be no obstacle; oh, that there were none on hers! but I must proceed.

"In the same pew with this beautiful girl, sat an elderly lady with a pale and somewhat haggard face; of which the general expression exhibited traces of long suffering. Her eye, the fire of which seemed nearly extinguished, was often raised to heaven with calm and pious resignation. She appeared much troubled with a cough, which, whenever it returned, excited a look

of anxious sympathy from her lovely companion; who observing her to shiver and look towards the door, immediately rose, and having in vain endeavoured to shut it, took off her shawl and fastened it up with two pins, to obstruct the current of air. She could not accomplish all this, as you must plainly see, without displaying to me the elegance of a slender and graceful form. On returning to her seat, a short dialogue ensued, which though I was unable to *hear*, I could plainly see. The substance was as follows: A smile from the sick lady, signifying "Thank you my dear," but which immediately changed into an anxious and fearful look—"Surely you yourself will be in danger of taking cold without your shawl;" the young lady shook her head, as much as to say, "No I shall not; don't be uneasy about me."

"I should have certainly observed much more, had not Hortensia endeavoured to divert continually by attention, by point-

ing out the helmet of some valiant knight, or ridiculing the spangled wreath* entwined by love or friendship, to the memory of the departed maid.

"Thirty years ago, when sentimentality was the fashion, the sight of these wreaths suffused many a bright eye; but now that polished apathy has usurped the place of of sensibility, the ladies of the *ton* discover, instead of the dewy eye of feeling, the contemptuous sneer, or the sarcastic grin. If we must have affectation, in God's name let it be the affectation of sensibility. This only made girls silly—the present fashion makes them absolutely vicious.

—But why do I concern myself about my nonsensical cousin? Have I not found the best, the most amiable of her sex? You smile—you know not—do you also falsely imagine that it is necessary to

* Alluding to a custom still existing in German villages, of hanging wreaths over the graves of young virgins.

know a woman for years, and to have daily intercourse with her, before one can justly estimate her character? You may accuse me of being paradoxical if you please; but I maintain the direct contrary.

"A young woman has no sooner made an impression on a man, than she is instantly aware of it—knows it perhaps even sooner than he does himself; and from that moment all her artlessness is at an end. Let him remain whole days in her presence, and converse with her hour after hour, she continues armed at all points against him; nor can he divest his mind of the conviction that all she might say or do, would in his absence be said and done in a very different manner.

"If, on the contrary, he can closely watch her from a distance of twenty paces, when she is unconscious of being observed, or of having made an impression, then it is that her character truly displays itself; every movement of her soul is open to the

observer's inspection; and he may, if he pleases, in half an hour, draw many a well-founded conclusion.

"This lovely girl, for example, who sat opposite to me—I speak now not of her person, but of her mind—What can you oppose to the following conclusions? The simple attire—did it not shew an uncorrupted taste? The hat tied down so closely, concealing rather than displaying her charms—did it not prove her modesty? Her uneasiness when her mother coughed, (it *must* be her mother,) her taking off her shawl to screen her from the air—did it not shew filial affection? Will you contradict me when I assert, that she, whom I saw only for a few minutes, and with whom I have never spoken a syllable, is a person cultivated, modest, affectionate? possessing a pure and excellent heart? "Enthusiast!" you exclaim, "your hour is come, you are in love." No, my friend, not yet—but I hope soon to be so."

Poor Fernau was mistaken. He was most truly in love; and that miss Holla had but too plainly seen. When the sermon was ended, she clapped him on the shoulder, to rouse him from the reverie into which he had sunk. "What's the matter?" said he, starting from his seat.

"What! don't you know the sermon is finished?"

"Already?"

"Already! why I protest *I* thought it would never end."

"And how heretical!" added the mother. "What think you, nephew? ought such sentiments to be thrown among the vulgar?"

"Rather dangerous," stammered Fernau, who had not heard a syllable of the sermon.

"What is dangerous?" inquired Hortensia, with a malignant sneer.

"I thought," answered he, blushing like a girl, "I thought——"

Miss Holla interrupted him, observing,

"It was much more dangerous to sit during a whole sermon staring at a handsome girl."

"You joke——"

"By no means. Oblige me with your arm; we are going home."

"Going home before the singing is over?"

"Never mind; people of fashion never sing hymns." With these words she hurried out of the pew, and in an instant blasted the hope he had conceived, that when the congregation dispersed, his eyes would be once more blessed with the sight of the lovely stranger.

Much as he wished to know who she might be, he dared not inquire, lest his embarrassment should betray the emotion of his soul. He therefore thought it better to commence a trivial conversation, which he hoped to manage so judiciously as to elicit, without apparent design, the intelligence he desired. A person in his proper senses, would long before have concluded

that the lady in question could be no other than the vicar's daughter; but lovers and astronomers have one property in common—that of looking at a distance for what is near at hand. It was very natural for Fernau to think himself distant from the mark, when he observed that the vicar was a man of pious demeanour. The remark brought him so near his point, that he would willingly have recalled it. "I thought," said miss Holla, "you had been wholly taken up with his daughter; who, if one may judge by your rude stare, you do not think quite so pious."

"Is that the vicar's daughter?" asked he, with an embarrassed eagerness; which drew from Hortensia a horse-laugh.

"Yes, to be sure," said she, "a simpleton of about fifteen. I can never think without laughing on the clumsy curtesy she made me when my *Ma* and I condescended to call on them one day. And while we were at tea, don't you remem-

ber, *Ma*, the conversation was so spiritless that we were often quite at a stand? During one of these pauses I thought I heard something squeak, and that the sound seemed to come from little miss Charlotte."

"Charlotte! is that her name?" interrupted Fernau.

Hortensia replied in the affirmative, and continued her narrative: "The squeaking was repeated, but louder than before, so that *Ma* and I naturally turned to the person from whom it appeared to proceed. The poor girl blushed as red as crimson, and sat like a fool. At length her mother told us, the noise came from a half-frozen chicken which Charlotte, by the warmth of her bosom, had restored to life. *Ma* and I were ready to burst with laughter. Only think, Charles! the droll squeaking of the chicken, and the childish confusion of the girl, just as if it had been a young love couching in her bosom."

But although Hortensia endeavoured to give the story every ludicrous touch in her power, and even condescended to imitate with her own lips the noise she had described—all was in vain. Not a single smile was to be obtained from the abstracted Fernan; who as soon as dinner was ended, slung his gun over his shoulder, and hastened through the village. The idea of taking the gun, which appeared to him a happy conception, was in effect none of the most judicious: first, because there is no game at Whitsuntide; and secondly, because hares seldom run across a church-yard, the place to which his steps were directed. These, however, were objections of trifling moment. The gun inspired him with a sort of self-command, and enabled him to proceed boldly. Without it, he fancied every peasant he met would seem to say, "Where are you going?" and then "ha, ha! you are going, I suppose to see the parson's pretty daughter." But with his gun, he could

pass every one with perfect self-possession; since it presented the obvious explanation, that he was abroad for sport. Unhappily, however, he had not taken the precaution to provide the lock with a flint, which might have furnished the solution, that his object was to shoot the daws who frequented the old steeple. But it never entered his brain, whether his piece had either a flint or a charge; and it was unluckily without either.

It must be plain to every one, however, that the church-yard led to the fields, and that if he should stop by accident to read the inscriptions on the tombstones, nothing, it would be allowed, is more interesting, than to know on what day such or such a farmer was born or buried. The epitaphs must have been difficult to decypher; for it is certain he loitered somewhat before those tomb-stones which happened to be opposite the parsonage windows; and seemed to pore on the inscriptions with as much intense perse-

verance as if they had been written in Greek, or even in hieroglyphics; and in casting about for the proper explication, to be sure, his eye did occasionally fall on the vicar's windows, seeking doubtless a ray of illumination; yet those windows reflected only the rays of the fervid sun, as a skreen from which, the windows were provided with green blinds. These, Fernan could not avoid thinking extremely ugly.

Having wandered about long enough to have learnt every epitaph by heart, he returned full of disappointment and chagrin, which was not a little increased by Hortensia's asking him in sarcastic raillery, what success he had met with. The ill-humour and restlessness which haunted him during the whole evening, was not unobserved by the experienced ladies; who, bent upon being more nearly allied to him, and perceiving that the lovely Charlotte, (in spite of the ludicrous story of the chicken, &c.) threatened to frustrate such relationship,

unanimously resolved, that the most likely means to extricate him from the snare, would be to introduce him the first opportunity to the company of the dreaded beauty; nothing doubting, that her ignorance would soon efface the impression her beauty had made. It was conceived that with such a foil, the talents of Hortensia must appear transcendently bright, and overwhelm by the comparison, with shame and confusion, the deluded Fernau.

They were of opinion, (and in this they were right,) that if they could succeed in once making him ashamed of the object of his passion, they should have no reason with a man of his description, to apprehend a relapse.

In pursuance of this well digested scheme, Hortensia during supper remarked, with infinite *sang froid*, that she had heard it had been always customary on great festivals, to invite the vicar and his family to dinner; a custom she was by no means disposed to violate, lest such

conduct should be imputed to pride. She therefore proposed inviting them for the following day.

Fernau was caught in the snare. The mother had no great inclination; but the young lady appealed to Fernau, who was of course on her side. Mama, with an amiable condescension, yielded to the wishes of her daughter and cousin, very judiciously observing, that "in all situations sacrifices were required." A servant was instantly dispatched with the invitation. While he was gone, Fernau preserved a perfect silence, eating ravenously of every dish, and drinking eagerly from every decanter. Whenever the door opened, he cast an inquiring look towards it. When the servant finally returned, he snatched up a piece of bread, and in dividing it, cut a large gash in his finger, which he very leisurely bound up with the napkin, and laid his pocket handkerchief on the table in its place.

The servant brought back the message

that Mrs. Wille being indisposed, would be prevented from accepting the invitation; but that the vicar and his daughter would do themselves that honour.

Fernau's suspended faculties were now restored; he again drew breath, yet with so much difficulty, that he was astonished at himself. He hastily asked the servant if the sky did not threaten a storm? The man replied that there was not a cloud to be seen, nor indeed had one been visible the whole day. The ladies exerted an effort to smother their risibility, ordered the cloth to be removed, applied some court plaister to Fernau's cut finger, and wishing him a good night, retired to rest.

But a *good* night was not in their power to bestow upon him. The greatest part of it was employed in retracing the events of the preceding day, and in praying for the recovery of Charlotte's mother. At breakfast on the following morning, he proposed walking to the parsonage; which being acceded to, he called to inquire

after Mrs. Wille's health, and was informed that she had passed a tolerable night; but whether the word *tolerable* signified that she could dispense with the attendance of her daughter, was past Fernau's skill to divine. *Tolerable* is one of that long catalogue of words which receive their import from the tone in which they are uttered, and the gesture with which they are accompanied. When a critic of the present day observes, with a slow inclination of the head, that a work not of his school is—tolerable; that means good. When a lady first sees the favourite of her husband, and pronounces with a penetrating look and scornful twist of the nose,—tolerable; it implies beautiful. When a sincere but polite man is asked by a lady how he likes her poems, and he replies with a sarcastic smile—tolerable; that means good for nothing. When a general informs his court, that the troops have behaved—tolerably, and only made a *mouvement retro-*

grade; that means—they have run away. When a lady has the head-ach, and her husband with burdensome tenderness offers to stay with her, and she replies—pray go, my dear, my head is tolerable; she means—go to the devil!

Man is said to distinguish himself from the brutes by the gift of speech. This is not true. All other creatures speak; but their speech suffers no modification; in them the same tone always signifies the same thing. The power of modification then, by tone and gesture, is that which affords to man the grand prerogative, of being the only—deceitful being in the creation!

With these and similar analyzations, Fernau's mind was busied till the village bell struck his ear, when he hastened to attend Mrs. and miss Holla to divine service. Little did he expect the trial which awaited him. The ladies wisely thought, it would not be expedient to suffer him again to imbibe the poison of beauty,

without receiving at the same time the antidote of stupidity; and therefore, on account of a—tolerable head-ach, resolved to fulfil the duties of the morning at home. These were performed in the following manner: Hortensia commenced with repeating a sonnet to the Holy Virgin, from Tiec; after which Fernau was requested to read a chapter in Jacob Bohm. Then followed the pious and affecting drama entitled "The Triumph of the Holy Cross," (the translation of which, from the Spanish, has immortalized the name of Mr. Schlegel among the devout christians of Germany,) and the service closed with some poems by Novalis.

Fernau, who, to speak with Jean Paul, was little better than a sceptic, and had the misfortune to regard all this parade as poor insipid stuff, suffered a severe trial of patience; till, to his inexpressible joy, the clatter of rhyme finally gave place to that of dishes and plates in an adjoining room; and the latter of these noises possess-

ed in his opinion, one important advantage over the former—that of leading to something substantial.

The church clock had struck twelve. Fernau was standing before a landscape of Hortensia's, and appeared to be attentively contemplating its individual beauties; but in fact he had only chosen that place, because from a contiguous window he could command a view of the lane up which the guests were to come. This time the suspicious Hortensia was misled by her vanity; and where is the woman whom vanity will not assist to dupe herself? She found it extremely natural that one of her best performances should fetter his attention. How bitter then must have been her disappointment on hearing the unguarded exclamation, "Here they come!" No one was coming on the drawing, therefore it was plain he had been standing before it with his whole body—his eyes only excepted.

The painful reflections produced by this

unwelcome circumstance, promised to sour her temper for the remainder of the day; but they were banished in an instant on the anticipation of a glorious triumph over her unworthy rival; who, at this moment, modestly followed her father into the room.

The venerable ecclesiastic had the air of a patriarch of the primitive church. Age, not passion, had furrowed his pale visage; over which, confidence in God, and the sweet conviction of a well-spent life, had diffused a calm serenity. His unembarrassed and upright mien commanded the instantaneous admiration of the wise and good, while it kept folly and presumption in awe.

And Charlotte! O that my readers had but seen the Madona in the great picture gallery at Paris!—I might spare the attempt to describe her! A face, a single glance of which could not fail to win your confidence; and in which, without being a physiognomist, the most perfect amiability

might distinctly be read—a face before which you could one moment sink devoutly prostrate, and the next impress it with fervent kisses; let the reader select and put together what features he pleases.

This day, no hat concealed her trancendent loveliness; her eyes benignly bright, were beautifully shaded by deep eye-lashes; over her forehead the light hair flowed in natural ringlets; and her cheek glowed with the roseate flush of modesty. Her white dress closing round the neck, veiled her swelling bosom; which, with artless taste, she strove to hide with a bunch of lilies of the valley. A bright ray of purity played round her lovely form; and St. Alvisius might have been pardoned in mistaking it for his celestial bride. This was not the image, however, which she presented to the eyes of miss Holla, who, (agreeably to the established custom among women,) estimated the beauty of Charlotte by her own. She compared both face and figure, and having found

very little similarity, drew this incontrovertible conclusion:—The girl is, after all, only—tolerable; by which she meant—ugly!

In order to attack Charlotte with her own weapons, she had dressed herself, as she thought, quite in the rural stile. A wreath of large blue flowers encircled her head, and a dress of the finest India muslin was so closely strained round her hips, so low in the bosom, so short in the sleeves, that a person ignorant of the prevailing fashion might have supposed there had been too small a quantity of stuff.

When the company were seated at dinner, Hortensia, eager to display her erudition, began a conversation, of which the object was to prove the superiority of the heathen over the christian religion; deriving her arguments from Schiller's "Gods of Greece," in total disregard of the innocence of the young creature beside her, or of the presence of the domestics. In the capital she could argue and sophis-

ticate to some advantage; but here the circle was much too circumscribed; and she was fearful that if she had chosen any other subject, she should not have met with any opposition from the good old vicar. This topic also furnished her with another advantage; it enabled her to shew her acquaintance with the heathen mythology, of which Charlotte was unquestionably ignorant. She began therefore by descanting upon the Naiads murmuring from springs, and Druids whispering from trees; and lamented that we were now obliged to seek supernatural images in empty nature.

She spoke for some time without interruption; for her mother was lost in silent admiration of her eloquence. Fernau heard not a syllable; and saw nothing but the unassuming Charlotte. The old vicar, disgusted at length with her loquacity, politely observed, he thought the subject ill chosen.

"Confess, rather," said miss Holla,

with a triumphant air, "that notwithstanding your age, your wisdom and experience, you have nothing to say against it."

He gave her a look of compassion; and after a short pause, turning to his daughter, said, "You are young, ignorant, and inexperienced; do you answer for me." She blushed deeply at the unexpected challenge, and could not immediately collect herself. Her opponent gave her a scornful look—Fernau gasped for breath. The vicar continued with a persuasive tone, "Speak, my dear, just what your heart dictates; art would be useless here."

Charlotte for the first time opened her mouth, and the most melodious tones falling like soft music on Fernau's ear, vibrated through every nerve. "I think," said she, modestly, "that the benign spirit of the Creator is diffused without exception through all nature; and that they are to be pitied who are obliged to seek it exclusively in trees and springs, because

they evidently have it not in their own bosoms."

She said no more, but turned her speaking eyes downwards, as if confounded at the sound of her own voice.

"Exactly my own opinion," said the old man, raising his eyes to heaven with the complacent approbation of a superior being.

"Exactly my own opinion," reiterated the enraptured Fernau, scarcely able to contain himself.

Hortensia reddened, and was for a moment at a loss for an answer; she therefore filled up the pause with a lady-like, and of course—unmeaning laugh. "I dare say," said she to Charlotte, "it would be as difficult for you to make your benign spirit visible, as for me to shew you my Druids and Naiads; but I must own, what you said was not amiss, therefore we will drop it: for in polite company, a subject must only be touched upon, not exhausted."

The vicar observed, "there were some subjects which should either never be touched on, or wholly exhausted."

"Right," said Hortensia, biting her lips with vexation, and trying to carry it off in a forced laugh; "the immortality of the soul, for example—what think you of that?"

"Just what I teach," was the answer; but it was accompanied by a look expressive of all the displeasure his countenance was capable of assuming. Miss Holla chose this subject, not so much to display her argumentative powers, as to introduce some French verses from Voltaire and others; and by the fluency with which she spoke a foreign language, utterly to confound her unassuming rival. To this end, at the conclusion of each quotation, she applied to Charlotte, asking with a self-complacent smile, "if it were not charming, delightful, heavenly?"—and receiving for answer only a gentle inclination of the head, she concluded her triumph

to be complete; when as she was darting a triumphant look at Fernau, the vicar suddenly asked his daughter if she knew of no reply?

"I think I do," said she, timidly.

"Speak, then," rejoined he; "I do not blame your bashfulness; but, in the present instance, I could wish you to overcome it; such sentiments ought not to remain unanswered."

She raised her eyes to her father—he gave her a significant nod, and with a faltering voice she began to repeat one of the finest pieces of Delille's "*Dithyrambe sur l' Immortalité de l' Ame*." By degrees she became reassured, and her voice firm and commanding. Her cheek assumed a deeper dye; her eye an awful penetration; and when she uttered the words, "Tremble, for thou art immortal!" she was transformed into a chastising angel: but when she pronounced "Faint not—thou art immortal!" her face reassumed its own heavenly sweetness—a tear of extacy stole

from her mild blue eye, and the harmony of her voice irresistibly penetrated every heart.

"Just so it is!" said the vicar.

"Just so it is!" repeated Fernau.

Mrs. Holla found it expedient to push back her chair a little, and give her wise daughter room to withdraw from her mortifying situation. Dinner being over, Charlotte withdrew, and returned home to her sick mother; Mrs. Holla had recourse to her accustomed nap, and miss Holla was disposed to quarrel with Fernau, the vicar, herself, and every created being.

To entertain the venerable guest, wholly devolved on Fernau, who fulfilled this duty with pleasure; and as Charlotte was no longer present, found himself capable of displaying his powers to advantage. He was surprised to find in the vicar a man uniting the rare qualities of an upright mind and a solid understanding; a man, whose flow of language in conversation, composure when contradicted, can-

dour in judging, and skill in the modern European languages, discovered him to be an experienced man of the world.

Such was Mr. Wille. He had been for many years chaplain to the ambassador in Holland. The suavity of his manners, and the estimable qualities of his heart, had gained him many friends and patrons among the diplomatic corps—a word, by the way, ill suited to its general acceptation: for where is there a *body* whose individual members are ever on the watch for the moment when with the utmost politeness they may disjoint, or even devour each other; whose every member appears only created to extract or guide into its own channel the vital fluid of its neighbour? And yet this word is not more unsuitable than many others now in use among the *great* world! What, I would ask, can be more opposite to *great*, than the medley of cabals, intrigues, &c. &c. which compose what is called the *great world*?

From this great world Mr. Wille had happily escaped. The above-mentioned friends and patrons were indeed much surprised, that he, who had so long been devoted to polite circles, who had found his happiness in the applause of others, (sometimes fools,) and had eagerly sought the most splendid entertainments, should retreat to a ruinous parsonage, instead of aspiring to the chaplaincy of some prince or potentate. But Mr. Wille was as tired of polished life, as a traveller in Italy is of the never-ending vineyards. Nay more: for the latter yield in autumn a delicious fruit; but what does the former yield?

Another reason for his preference of the ruinous parsonage was, that it contained a lovely girl, who from his infant years had possessed his heart; and the old vicar, her father, had resolved that no one should receive the hand of his daughter, to whom he could not at the same time, with a safe conscience, consign his pulpit and his

flock. He consented to this arrangement without a moment's reflection—an arrangement he had never after cause to repent.

In this situation he had already spent eighteen happy years of his life, beloved by his family and revered by his flock. Every tie which bound him to his former connection had been resolutely broken. In the first twelve months, the *lost* years of his life (as he used to term them) were obliterated from his memory. For the sake of two dear children, with whom this happy marriage had been blest, he had continued diligently to cultivate every polite accomplishment. The pains he had taken with his daughter has already appeared. His son, a fine spirited youth, was about to finish his education at the university, and had received towards this object, from his father, more than the usual acquirements.

The first, and only misfortune which befel him, was the declining health of his wife, who was in a confirmed consump-

tion. Every means had been vainly tried for her recovery, and when the skill of her physicians was exhausted, they prescribed a journey to a warm climate; thus freeing themselves from all farther responsibility, without giving themselves the trouble to consider the practicability of the prescription, or even its probable success. In the present case, a journey to Naples was as impossible as a journey to the moon: for the vicar possessed no more than sufficed for the comfortable support of his family, nor even that, without unremitting exertion. The advice, then, of the wise sons of Esculapius had no other effect than that of overwhelming the anxious husband for many months with despair. The agonizing reflection that the means existed of saving his beloved wife, joined with his own inability to avail himself of those means, first suggested the idea of applying himself to those friends who had formerly been so liberal of their friendly professions. In the bitterness of his grief

he wrote to all of them in their turn. Many of them were dead, and from the survivors he received no answer. Willingly would he have resigned his cure to a young student for an immediate supply of the necessary sum, but the consistory forbade all such simoniacal traffic.

He now conceived the design of writing a treatise on the morals of christianity; in the execution of which he almost deprived himself of rest, that he might shorten the period of his labour. It was an excellent work; but on offering it to the booksellers, nine out of ten returned his MS. and the tenth offered him only a few dollars. This had been his last resource; and disappointed in that on which he had chiefly relied, he sunk into despair. His children, who shared his grief, were also anxious to remove it. Frederic offered to abandon his college education and turn mechanic. Charlotte would willingly have become a lady's maid, with the generous intention of saving money from her

wages, to minister to her mother's cure. But these schemes, though proofs of strong affection, were altogether insufficient for the proposed end.

The parsonage now became a scene of silent sorrow; and so continued till the physicians finally gave up their patient as incurable. But, contrary to all expectation, the old lady, as if in defiance of the faculty, began gradually to amend. And though she suffered much from a cough, and the various fluctuations of a pulmonary disease, yet, at length, she became in some sort accustomed to pain; and the use of simple remedies, as Iceland moss, &c. restored her to a portion of her former health: and her confidence in God inspired her with no inconsiderable share of spirits.

Thus, during several years, she hung tottering upon the brink of the grave, which yawned to receive her; and her fond relatives indulged once more the hope, that with the continuance of their

unwearied attentions, she might yet bless them for many a year. This delightful hope had re-animated the whole family; and nothing now remained of their former anxiety, but the habit of doing every thing without noise; speaking softly; shutting and opening doors gently; driving away barking dogs, and every thing else which could possibly ruffle or irritate the weak frame of the beloved convalescent.

Thus much and more Fernau learnt during the short intercourse of a few hours. His sympathising heart caused that of the good vicar to overflow; for kindred souls soon find out that they understand one another. "I," said the old man, at the close of his narrative, "belong to that enviable class of beings, who have no new blessings to ask of the creator; but simply to pray for the continuance of those already bestowed! Should you like to witness my domestic joy, my house is ever open to receive you; and I

trust, to a man of your stamp, our society will not prove tedious."

That Fernau accepted the invitation, and that he had rather have accepted it that very instant, than have waited till the next day, may be easily conceived, both by those who are in love, and those who are not.

The wished-for moment arrived! Mrs. Holla had just set the card table, and Hortensia began eagerly to grasp the cards, when Fernau with a palpitating heart, and trembling step, took his way to the parsonage, in defiance of the storm which he knew would burst upon him at his return.

On his way thither, he laid a charge on himself not to run; not to laugh; not to talk to himself; things of which he would have remained unconscious, had he not observed that the parish clerk, who met him, looked at him with astonishment, and cautiously turned out of his way. When he arrived at the parsonage,

it was long before he could summon courage to knock; at length he succeeded, and some one approached. Who could it be but Charlotte? He was now at a loss to know what he should say to her. "Fool that I am," said he, "what can make me so stupid?" "*Love*," answered a gentle voice within. He gave a deep sigh; a stranger opened the door, and restored him to his senses. It was a girl about the age of Charlotte, pretty, genteel, and modest. He was about to accost her as another daughter of the vicar, but recollected he had spoken only of one. From her dress he would have thought her little above the condition of a servant; though the freedom with which she invited him into the parlour, convinced him she was something higher.

The vicar received his new guest with unaffected cordiality; but as he was about to present him to his wife, he suddenly recollected that he was unacquainted with his name. "Pardon me,

said he with a smile, "the name is one of the last things I inquire into; for among people of sense, names are so perfectly insignificant, that when I ask the name of a stranger, I feel as I should were I standing by a fine bed of pinks, and the florist, instead of designating each to me by the name expressive of its colour or quality—as the carnation, sweet-scented, &c. should call one a prince of Orange, and another an admiral Trump. The Iroquois, and many other nations whom we decry as barbarous, confer names expressive of the qualities of those to whom they are applied. From this custom arise, in my opinion, two great advantages; first—when you hear a person's name mentioned, you can immediately form some estimate of his character; secondly—it prevents his children from pluming themselves on the name of their father. Suppose, for instance, some hero under prince Eugene should have raised himself by deeds of valour to the rank of nobility, and re-

ceived the title of Mr. Von Türkenschild, (Turksshield,) the simple name would serve as an honourable passport to him wherever he appeared. Every one to whom Mr. Von Türkenschild was introduced, would immediately become acquainted with him, and be disposed to be his friend; but what could be more absurd, than, after the lapse of a century, for a race of little Türkenschilds to be running about, who were scarcely substantial enough to keep out a shower of rain? It is therefore a maxim with me, always to find out something of the man, and give him some appellation in my own mind, before I ask his *real* or *unreal* name. You, for example, are already known to my wife by your real name, *Worthy*; for form's sake, however, favour me with your *unreal* name. Fernau announced himself, and was received by Mrs. Wille with more kindness than he would have been, had he done so before the digression on names. He had availed himself of this excursion to North

America, to cast a tender glance at Charlotte; who, returning it with a slight inclination, continued turning her spinning wheel with the rapidity of a Livonian slave, whose task is allotted her.

But the glance, and subsequent crimson of Charlotte's cheek, were not unobserved by the attentive mother, in whose mind they produced a long train of reflections. From these resulted two grand conclusions, the one *true*, the other *false*. The true one was—My daughter has excited an interest in this young man; the false one was—He has hinted it to her. Had the old lady expressed it in other words, it would have been no longer false; as—My daughter has observed it. Charlotte, with all her native simplicity, was yet a woman, and had, on their first interview, beguiled him of the secret of his heart. Every lord of the creation who has paid the slightest attention to these masterpieces of the creation, must be well convinced that they can, apparently with the

most perfect unconcern, and even while engaged in very different pursuits, extract from poor weak man every feeling of his bosom; and read in his faithless eyes every vibration of his heart! Whoever believes the contrary, is a novice indeed.

What could Charlotte think, when every time she ventured to raise her eyes, (on the preceding day,) those of the enraptured Fernau threatened almost to annihilate her! How could she explain the rapture he twice discovered, when at the command of her father she uttered a few syllables? "He likes you," whispered a voice, who, though it had never before ventured to become audible, must certainly have had rather a lively conversation with her the day before, while she was returning home; for when her father mentioned at supper that the strange gentleman was coming to visit them, she discovered in herself similar sensations to those she felt now that he was really present.

The old vicar, although so well versed

in diplomatic affairs, had not the slightest suspicion of what was going forward. His wife, on the contrary, though she had never been absent from her own little village, was in a moment aware of the whole. The hope of uniting her daughter to a man whom her husband had pronounced *Worthy*, and that at a time when her days were drawing to a close, had lighted up in her languid eye an unusual lustre, and diffused a glow over her pale cheek. Her soul, long accustomed to the contemplation of gloomy objects, was now enlivened by the cheering thought of Charlotte's happiness.

That Charlotte was mistress of Fernau's heart was evident; but whether he were in a situation to marry, and whether he would marry a vicar's daughter, were circumstances with which she hoped by a few subtle questions to find out. She embraced the first opportunity of entering into a conversation with him, which, however unimportant it might appear, put

her in full possession of all she wanted. Thus satisfied, she abandoned her mind to the anticipation of future happiness; while Charlotte, ignorant of the cause of her sudden complacency, frequently left off spinning to contemplate her, with eyes suffused with tears of filial affection.

Fernau also, animated with the desire of pleasing, unfolded the qualities of his heart and mind to so much advantage, as to ensure himself the esteem and confidence of this excellent family. Frederic Wille, a bashful youth, though a year older than his sister, was so far wrought upon and emboldened by the delightful affability of Fernau, that he even challenged him to a game at chess; a game he had lately been learning of his father, and which he prosecuted with his characteristic eagerness.

Fernau, who was expert at the game, accepted the challenge, less to oblige the brother than to have an opportunity of catching an occasional glance at the lovely

sister; and notwithstanding the abstraction which this produced, his victory was easy over his less skilful opponent. Frederic, however, was not sufficiently versed in the maxims of politeness to bear his defeat with proper equanimity, but left the room with evident symptoms of mortification, at the idea of his supposed humiliation. "I hope," said Maria, as he was going out, "that, in future, you will not be so hasty in boasting—there is no great art in beating me."

These words drew Fernau's attention towards her; for though she had been spinning by Charlotte's side, he had never once observed her since she had opened the door for him. He perceived that her dress and appearance were no way inferior to Charlotte's; and from the familiarity with which she spoke to Frederic, he concluded she must surely be his sister.

"If I mistake not," said he to the vicar, "you spoke yesterday only of two children?"

"Right," said he, "in one sense of the

word I have but two; the third was sent me by providence, without my concurrence. This good girl," continued he, pointing to Maria, "is an orphan, in as much as her real parents are dead. For the rest, she will never be one while we live. The two girls love each other like sisters,—(he gave an appealing look to Charlotte, who smiled, and tenderly caught Maria's hand) and for *our* parts, I and my wife know no difference."

Maria, who during this scene had been struggling to conceal the emotions of her grateful heart, was now overpowered; she burst into a flood of tears, and hurried out of the room.

Every thing he saw attached Fernau more and more to these excellent people; and having spent a few more happy hours in their company, the close of evening reminded him that it was high time to conclude his first visit. But he left them with the firm resolution; that if ever he married, Charlotte should be his wife.

In the church-yard, he turned round to inhale the perfume of the lime trees, which was wafted by the evening breeze, exclaiming with deep emotion, "My Charlotte!" Charlotte, who had unconsciously stood lingering at the door, overheard the enraptured sounds; and, as if panic struck at hearing her own name thus pronounced, she hastened to the garden, that she might conceal her blushes in a distant arbour.

Though Fernau and she had not exchanged a single syllable, they had nevertheless conversed much. Her conscience whispered to her, that her spinning had not been conducted with her usual care; and that numerous broken threads attested her frequent wanderings, and betrayed her agitation. She now found it necessary to gather a large bunch of jessamine, in order to conceal from her parents the changes in her countenance.

The cool reception Fernau met with from the ladies at the card-table, plainl

evinced the magnitude of his offence, in quitting their company so abruptly. After patiently waiting for him a quarter of an hour, they found on enquiry, that he had been seen by the clerk not far distant from the parsonage.

At this intelligence, the eyes of Hortensia flashed fire, and her lips turned blue with rage. But the mother, more experienced and more artful, attributed the transgression with great sagacity to its true cause, tracing it to its source in Charlotte's eyes; and concluded by loading their possessor with the whole weight of the guilt. She very judiciously determined, therefore, that the culprit Fernau should be reinstated in favour in case of repentance and amendment.

Accordingly, on Fernau's entrance at supper, the conversation commenced with broad hints, sarcastic reflections, and pointed censures on the violation of good manners, disrespect to relations, and treason against friendship. These remarks

were accompanied with so much asperity, and plainness of allusion, that Fernau, anxious to screen himself from the weighty charges alledged against him, committed himself still farther by the most inconsiderate confession. "My dear cousin, (said he) you must indeed pardon the indiscretions of a man who for the first time in his life feels himself under the influence of love."

Hortensia turned pale, and had only power to utter the word "really!"—but she accompanied it with so expressive a sneer, that it might have passed for a formal declaration of war against the hated Charlotte.

The tender mother, thinking it time to bring forward her artillery in aid of her daughter, addressed Fernau with a hope, that he would not think of making himself ridiculous!

"Ridiculous!" repeated he, vainly endeavouring to stifle his disgust; "ridiculous for loving a paragon of beauty, innocence, and modesty!"

Miss Holla relieved herself by a loud laugh, in which her parrot in the corner of the drawing room happening to join, she gave a triumphant look, and exclaimed "bravo!"

"May I ask the cause of your mirth?" said Fernau, with unusual gravity.

"I hope," replied Hortensia, "you will allow me to laugh at what diverts even my parrot."

"Perhaps the cause is equally unknown to both."

"Sir!"

"Pardon me, my pretty cousin, since I have already confessed that at present I am not master of myself."

"Then I should think it advisable," interposed Mrs, Holla, coolly, "for you to accept the guidance of friends who are concerned for your welfare."

"That was my intention," answered Fernau, "I was going to beg of my cousin—(Hortensia's couutenance cleared up a little,) I was going to beg, that my

cousin would offer my hand and heart to the lovely girl."

"You are mad!" screamed Hortensia, pushing back her chair, and knocking down a full glass of wine. "I had a horrible head-ach before you came home; but your knight errantry renders it insupportable. You know, dear mama," said she, "how it affects my spirits when I see an estimable character plunging headlong into ruin!"

She coldly wished Ferrau a good night; scratched her parrot's head as she passed; forced herself to hum an opera air, and hastened to her dressing room; where finding her maid asleep, she relieved her oppressed heart by boxing her ears.

Mrs. Holla, after the discomfiture and retreat of her daughter, spent a short time in endeavouring to draw her deluded nephew from the precipice of passion, to the smooth and poetical path which led to her daughter's bridal chamber.

"You cannot conceive, dear Charles,

(said she) what a bad character the old vicar bears. His heterodoxy is generally known at the capital, for he has been once called before the consistory, and with difficulty escaped disgrace. Who knows what may yet take place? The president, who is our particular friend, and comes every week to drink Rhenish wine with us, has endeavoured at our request to suppress all farther complaints."

"And in future," returned Fernau, "the president will use his influence with still more pleasure, when the old man's daughter is become your neice."

"Yes —— certainly," was drawled out with so much deliberation, that it might have been taken for a positive *no*! "But have you considered," added she, "their extreme poverty?—I assure you, my daughter, who is very charitable, has been proposing to send some of her left-off clothes to miss Wille."

"There will be no occasion for that,"

said Fernau, reddening with displeasure, "if she condescend to accept my hand."

"Condescend!" retorted Mrs. Holla, with a contemptuous toss of her head, "O never doubt it! she will accept it eagerly enough—she never could have raised her thoughts above a country shopkeeper."

Fernau's feelings were now wound up to a pitch that demanded all his resolution to restrain them within the limits of discretion; but not caring to trust his self-command any longer, he arose, and taking a formal but polite leave, retired to his chamber. He rested better this night than he had done the preceding, for his determination was already fixed.

Mrs. Holla hastened to the apartment of her disconsolate daughter, with whom she sat in deep consultation till the dawn of the next morning; but the result of their deliberations was not known before the ensuing evening.

Fernau having hurried immediately after dinner the next day, in spite of nods, winks, shrugs, and innuendoes, to the parsonage, was informed on his return, that in consequence of a letter from Holla, by which they learnt, that certain domestic arrangements required their immediate presence at home, they should set off as early as possible the following morning. The ladies had here built on the truth of the proverb, "Out of sight out of mind;" which (as they supposed) must necessarily be verified by Fernau, when once drawn from the scene of temptation; not reflecting that Charlotte's image did not merely float in his mind, but was deeply engraven in his heart; and that no proverb had declared "Out of sight, out of heart."

Fernau was startled at the intelligence, for which he was quite unprepared; it having been Hortensia's uniform declaration, that nothing in existence should draw her away from the country, while the song of a single nightingale was to be

heard. But recovering speedily from his surprise, inventive love suggested to him an ingenious expedient to relieve him from his embarrassment. He gravely lamented, that it would not be in his power to accompany them on their return, as he was under the necessity of spending a few weeks longer, at least, in the country.

"I hope," said Hortensia, in a lofty tone, "your new attachment will not lead you to lose sight of what you owe to your nearest relations! You have surely courage to part for a few days, after which you can again be wafted back on the wings of love without opposition. From *me* you will at least have none."

"You are too severe, my lovely cousin," replied he; "I have this morning received a letter from my physician, enjoining me to remain here till the ensuing spring."

Hortensia silently bit her lips.

"If that be the case," said Mrs. Holl "we will not think of troubling Mr. F

nau to attend us, and I only have to lament my inability to accomodate him with an apartment here, on account of some repairs, which will render it necessary to take down most of the partitions."

Hortensia gave her mother a look of malicious exultation, which seemed to say—"So dextrous I hardly thought you!"

Fernau remained unmoved. "There is no doubt a public house in the village," said he, "where I shall be very well satisfied."

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Mrs. Holla, "a dirty alehouse, where you will be suffocated in eight-and-forty hours."

"Perhaps," observed Hortensia, sneeringly, "there may be a corner of the parsonage at his service."

"I own," rejoined Fernau, "that is what I wish; and should I succeed, I shall not fail to give my aunt the earliest information."

"O, that would take too much time; in such cases every moment is precious!"

The evening was concluded in the interchange of similar sarcasms; and the next morning, when Fernau rose at five o'clock, to take leave of the ladies, he was informed they had set out at day-break.

He ordered his servant to convey his luggage to the public house, whither he himself previously repaired, in the expectation of finding it destitute of every convenience; but was agreeably surprised to see a neat commodious house, with much civility in the landlord. Mr. Braunfels, (for that was his name,) had served with reputation as corporal in the Prussian army, and had finally the good fortune to save the life of his commanding officer. In gratitude for so signal a service, that officer purchased, unknown to the corporal, the house in which he now lived, furnished it with every convenience, and on the anniversary of the memorable

day, fetched him in his own carriage from the garrison, and invested him in the property he now possessed. The soldier thus attained the summit of his ambition. The house was delightfully situated, and had always been much frequented. The respectable fame of its present possessor greatly enlarged its custom. Many a benighted traveller had driven a mile or two farther, for the sake of stopping at honest Braunfels'. He was beloved and respected by all the inhabitants of the village; and as his property daily increased, nothing was wanting to complete his comfort but a good wife. In this particular, however, he was rather doubtful of suiting his taste; for Braunfels, by his intercourse with the world as a soldier, and still more, by the habit of attention and civility to his guests, had acquired a sort of polish and refinement, which gave him a disgust to the vulgar manners of the women of his village.

Fernau, during a few hours continuance

in his house, discovered in him so much integrity and good sense, that he was convinced he had lost nothing by his change of residence. The morning, which had before hung on his hands, now flew rapidly away in putting in order his new apartment.

Scarcely had the shadow of the lime trees which surrounded the parsonage begun to lengthen, when Fernau eagerly flew to the spot, whence he seemed to derive a new and better existence. Charlotte, who was near the door, was so evidently, yet so agreeably surprised, that she exclaimed, "Is it possible! we thought you had been gone!"

The news of the departure of the family from the hall, had soon reached them, and they naturally concluded that Fernau had departed also. The father thought it unkind and disrespectful in Fernau not to have called; she herself knew not exactly what to think or feel on the occasion. Both, however, were greatly rejoiced at

having done him an injustice. He pleaded the necessity of staying in the country for the restoration of his health, and begged to be admitted as an inmate in their happy family; observing, that though he had a charming room at Braunfels', yet the table was by no means to his satisfaction. His request was readily complied with, and the only difficulty was respecting the *terms*, which Fernau persisted in thinking too low, and the vicar too high. Charlotte listened to the agreement with a fluttering heart. She had hitherto piqued herself on her culinary skill; but now, for the first time, this confidence in her powers forsook her. A sweet, yet weighty care, occupied and oppressed her thoughts. On her had devolved the concerns of the kitchen; and she had now to cook for a man who had already been the innocent cause of her twice over-salting the soup, and whom, nevertheless, she was desirous to please beyond the power of utterance.

The felicity of the parsonage received

no small addition by this accession to the family; Charlotte rose every morning at four, that she may devote the afternoon to Fernau, without having to reproach herself for neglect of domestic duties. Fernau spent most of his mornings in digging, sowing, planting, &c. in the vicar's garden, and found that labour in the open air of heaven was of more use in creating an appetite, than exhausting the whole spring of Piedmont.

His daily intercourse with this beautiful and innocent girl, daily increased his passion, and he loved her with a fire similar to that once stolen by Promotheus from the sun. He thought, however, that he had concealed it from observation; and wondered when Braunfels, with whom he still lodged, told him in confidence, that the little children in the village had talked of it to the schoolmaster!

Charlotte was much in the same predicament. The vicar and his wife saw every thing—only through different spec-

tacles. *He*, fully convinced of Fernau's integrity, patiently waited the moment when he would declare himself; and never made the slightest objection, if the lovers wandered for whole afternoons in the woods and meadows together. *She* had no less confidence in Fernau's honour; but feared, if things continued long in their present state, the character of her daughter would suffer; and even sometimes trembled at the apprehension of danger, to which the purest innocence is the most exposed. She dared not, however, impart her fears, lest the purity of that innocence should be sullied by even the breath of suspicion. Had she been in health, her prudence would have dictated the propriety of her always accompanying the lovers; but as it was, her only alternative was always to send out with them Maria or Frederic—guards, upon which, however, little reliance could be placed; and still less so from her

being obviously restrained from giving them any positive instructions.

In a few weeks, an accident relieved the tender mother from all her solicitude. Fernau, perfectly happy in his present situation, had no express design in delaying the desired disclosure of his intentions; but content as he was, frequently exclaimed with Schiller,

"Why should they change their heavenly hue?
"The verdant hours of new-born love!"

Yet, it is not to be denied, that love, whether old or new, seldom contents itself with the bare green, but has on the contrary, a headlong propensity to bring forth not merely blossoms, but actual fruit.

Thus it was with Fernau. At a little distance from the village was a stone quarry, whose cavities were overgrown with luxuriant shrubs, and an abundance of wild strawberries. To this romantic spot Charlotte had attached herself from

her infancy; and to this spot the young people repaired one afternoon to gather the delicious fruit for their sick mother. Fernau accompanied the happy group, and took, like the others, an empty basket.

It had been an established custom with Charlotte and her brother, that he should gather on the western side, where the projecting and irregular stones rendered the search difficult, and herself on the eastern side, where the gravelly surface was luxuriantly covered with soft and mossy grass. As no change had been made in this arrangement, Fernau ought certainly to have united his labours to those of Frederic; but this never once entered his head; and that the whole quarry might be searched with equal care, Maria was obliged to go on the side which he had left for her.

Fernau hunted for strawberries with the utmost diligence, and it was no fault of his that he found none: for he had to encounter a variety of impediments—not to

say abstractions—which are well known mightily to obstruct, in such circumstances, the gathering of strawberries. One moment he had to prevent a branch from hitting Charlotte in the face; and the next, to contemplate the slender form whose beauties were heightened and displayed by the variety of attitudes into which she was necessarily thrown. Now he had to drive away a wasp, lest it should sting her; and then to gaze in extacy on the mantling beauties of her glowing cheek: and if at length he espyed a strawberry, it grew so near the spot where her foot rested, that it was impossible to gather it. "A peasant boy of four years old," said she laughing, "would have filled his basket in half the time."

"Very likely," replied he, "but a peasant of four-and-twenty, I think, would have been as idle as I."

Charlotte's basket was nearly full, when happening to discover some fine fruit under a tree, away she sprung; and as she

stretched out her hand to gather it, out jumped a lizzard, which she mistaking for a serpent, flew back with a loud scream. The full basket in her left hand caught in a bough, depositing its whole contents on the grass beneath; and she stood with good-humoured vexation, contemplating the loss of two hours' toil. Fernau was on the alert in an instant, and began to pick up the scattered fruit with great assiduity; carefully depositing it in his own basket. Charlotte, who had by this time recovered from her fright, observed, that she should certainly allow of no such cheating; and kneeling down opposite to him, emptied the strawberries into their proper place; she then threw aside his basket, and setting hers on the ground between them, began diligently to collect her scattered strawberries, and called upon him to imitate her example.

Now it must be evident to every one who sees two inches beyond his nose, that this posture was of all others the most ad-

vantageous for the amorous god. Nay, it is even maintained that it was not the bough which overthrew the basket, but the self same waggish deity, who happened to be just then sitting thereon; and that he plumed himself not a little on the sly conceit, when he returned to the full assembly of his fellow gods. The consequences were inevitable. The spot on which the fruit lay was not larger than that usually measured by a couple of fools going to shoot one another. Charlotte and Fernau very properly began to gather up the berries which lay nearest them; and having by this gained room to kneel, were under the necessity, if they would not stretch out their hands too far, of approaching each other, at least a few inches at a time, which of course brought their faces nearer and nearer. A second circumstance, if possible worse than this, was the impossibility of putting the berries into the basket without their hands coming in contact. Now it is a known fact, that

the before-mentioned wicked Cupid can electrify at pleasure a whole body with the slightest touch of a finger. This danger might have been avoided had they nicely picked up the berries one by one with the right hand, and laid them carefully into the left, and when that had been full, have emptied them at once into the basket. It is strange that this simple preventive never occurred to them; and they continued, more dexterously than judiciously, to throw berry after berry into the basket with the right hand, and very commodiously leaning on the left. Fernau, it seems, was also far too much in a hurry, for he crushed many a ripe strawberry with his knees, purely for the sake of gaining ground. Rash man! not to reflect that he would finally be near enough to inhale her breath! and should this happen, what would become of his self-government? Regardless of his danger, he rushed on till at length the space between them was so small, that with out-

stretched arms he could encircle her slender waist! Overpowered by feelings which he could no longer restrain, he suddenly caught the unsuspecting Charlotte in his arms, pressed her with rapture to his heart, and had scarcely breath to utter, "Charlotte, will you be mine?"

Although she perceived him gradually approach, yet she was so terrified as to lose altogether the power of utterance or resistance. Fernau, still folding her in his arms, covered her cheeks and forehead with burning kisses; and, as if fearful lest she should open her lips too soon, sealed them in extatic union with his own.

At length a slight resistance from Charlotte reminded him that, if he desired an answer, he must necessarily allow her a little breath—and suffering her head to recline on his shoulder, again whispered in her ear, "Dear Charlotte, will you be mine?" he listened, and heard a scarcely audible "Yes." Heaven and earth vanished from his sight. The thorns were

adorned with roses; lilies sprang up from among the stones; and the clouds showered down blossoms of sweetest fragrance!

Time affords no measure for the duration of this silent rapture. They were awakened from this delightful dream by a gentle fluttering, and (as they conceived) the chirping of a grasshopper: but they were mistaken. It was the sly Cupid perched upon the contiguous bough, and merrily clapping his wings. Ill-fated strawberries! For the second time the basket was turned over and over by the kneeling lovers, who had crushed to mummy the subject berries, and dyed their knees with the crimson juice. Fernau laughed at their ludicrous appearance, and Charlotte, to conceal her blushes, again sunk on his bosom,

"Mr. Fernau!" called a harsh voice suddenly behind them—he sprang up, and Charlotte remained motionless. "Sister! what is the meaning of all this?"—Frederic and Maria, having filled their baskets,

were come to seek their companions, and had called them till they were tired without receiving any answer. Frederic could not for a moment conceive it possible that they should not have heard him; and as he had not the slightest suspicion of Fernau's attachment, his sense of honour was instantly roused, resentment flashed in his eye, and his voice vibrated with redoubled force. "Mr. Fernau!" he repeated, (and handed Maria the basket which he held in his hand, without knowing exactly why!) His feelings seemed to say, the momemt is too serious for me to hold in my hand the token of an amusement enjoyed with one whose principles appear suspicious.

Fernau at length recovered sufficiently to hear, see, and understand. "Charlotte will be mine, my dear Frederic," said he, kindly taking him by the hand. In an instant the dark cloud fled from his brow, leaving only a slight shade of suspicion. "I am rejoiced to hear it," said he, "but I cannot imagine why neither my father nor mother has mentioned it."

"Because it was but just this moment" —stammered Charlotte.

"Because they know nothing of it themselves," said Fernau, finishing Charlotte's half sentence.

"Really!" answered Frederic with a frown, "then you are not engaged to Mr. Fernau—he is in love with you, it should seem, and that's all?"

"In an hour," said Fernau, "I hope to receive her hand with a benediction from your parents."

"That will make a difference," replied Frederic, going very deliberately on, and turning round to see if Charlotte would follow. She lay in Maria's arms, who bedewed her with tears of joy. "We are going, Maria," said Frederic, mending his pace.

"To prevent mischief," said Maria, "we had better go with him." Fernau raised her from the ground, pressed her hand with tenderness, and hastened her towards home, whither Maria followed with the empty baskets.

By the time Frederic approached the parsonage, his walk was almost changed into a run, and he looked every moment behind, as if he had been guarding a couple of culprits. The vicar had just led his wife out to enjoy the cool air of the evening, and both were sitting on a bench under the shade of the lime trees, from whence they saw, with some surprize, the distribution of the train. When he observed the hasty strides of his son and his gloomy aspect, he exclaimed, "Something must have happened!" He had said too much for the irritable nerves of his debilitated wife; she looked towards them, and thinking she saw Fernau half covered with blood, she was with difficulty saved from fainting.

"There, father," said Frederic, (who had by this time reached his parents,) "I have brought them home, and I leave the rest to you."

"Charlotte will be mine," said Fernau; "all that remains to our felicity, is your blessing and consent."

The old vicar was so astonished, that he had scarcely power to speak, having seriously believed that Fernau's health was in a declining state. The mother was apprized of all in a moment; Charlotte's unaffected confusion, and Fernau's rapture, admitted of no misconstruction. She fondly opened her arms to receive her happy daughter, who fell sobbing on her bosom. The father caught Fernau's hand, and silently united it with his daughter's.

Frederic, fully satisfied that nothing was amiss, began running from one to the other, embracing and kissing them alternately, until Maria gently reminded them that the peasantry were collecting together to see what could be the occasion of so strange a scene.

"So much the better," answered the old vicar; "people in general make a shew of their *sorrows*, and keep their *joys* to themselves; but we will rejoice aloud, and thank God with an audible voice!" With these words he raised his eyes de-

voutly to heaven, but the loud voice failed him; he could produce nothing but a low ejaculation.

The evening was spent in sketching plans of future happiness, making promises of often visiting the beloved parents, and in discussing a number of topics, in themselves trivial, but which derive importance from such occasions. Yet, whatever turn the conversation took, Fernau's dexterity always directed it to the wedding-day, which he wished to be fixed for the ensuing Sunday.

"In three days!" said the father, laughing—"impossible! In three weeks, you mean." "For the banns to be published?" said Fernau, with a sigh, "I suppose, then, it must be so!"

Charlotte had like to have sighed too.

"Three weeks!" said the mother, "impossible! you mean three months! you have no conception of the number of things there are to do, and to buy, and to get ready."

A violent debate now ensued, in which

the father and brother joined Fernau against the mother, and in which Charlotte, though by no means uninterested, remained perfectly silent. Partly by expostulation, and partly by entreaty, the old lady was at last brought to promise, that in four weeks the myrtle wreath* should encircle the brows of the lovely bride.

Why should I attempt to describe the happiness enjoyed by the lovers during this interval? those who have experienced similar felicity would find the picture cold —and for those unfortunate beings who have not, the history is not written. It must, however, be mentioned, that during this time the management of the house and kitchen devolved entirely on Maria: for not a single jelly or tart was prepared by the hand of Charlotte.

Fernau, according to promise, wrote to Mrs. Holla, informing her of his approach-

* It is a custom prevalent in Germany, among all ranks, to wear, on the wedding-day, no other ornament on the head than simply a myrtle wreath. T.

ing nuptials, and received a very formal letter of congratulation. The same post brought another for the gardener, strictly forbidding him to send a single peach or apricot to the parsonage; thus gratifying a paltry resentment with the idea that the desert on the wedding day would consist of nothing but a few apples and pears. They had no conception that a plate of late strawberries afforded the happy pair a far more exquisite relish than they could have derived from the choicest rarities.

At the expiration of three months, Fernau again addressed his friend, in all the rapture of matrimonial joy: "It is impossible for your happiness to equal mine! You have often sketched me glowing pictures of connubial bliss, and my envy has often charged you with exaggeration. I have re-perused your letter, and now find all your descriptions cold! Twenty times have I snatched up my pen to pourtray to

you only a single hour of my present existence? Vain effort! I find that a happy marriage may be compared to the ambrosial gales of spring, which bestow on us, as it were, a renovated existence, but which can never admit of description.

"We live in the capital because I have not only a house there, but all its appendages—namely, friends, acquaintances, and humble dependants;—because the vicar's house is too small for our accommodation, and because—to you I dare confess the truth—I have there the best opportunity of shewing my beautiful wife. She, ashamed and mortified at the attention she excited, was long before she could be prevailed upon to accompany me to public places; but yielding at length, I proudly led her through the admiring crowds. Such is her retiring modesty, that, when every eye has been rivetted on our box at the theatre, she has often intreated me to withdraw before the piece was ended, that she might be relieved

from what she called the rude gaze of the multitude. But habit has rendered this less irksome to her, and she now accompanies me willingly wherever I wish to go. I have indeed been obliged to promise her that she shall spend the ensuing Lent in her native village."

With a sort of infantine joy did Charlotte count the days and hours, till the time of setting out arrived. She was met by her brother a few miles distant from her father's house, where her mother was anxiously awaiting the arrival of her beloved visitors, busily running from room to room, and getting every thing into the best order for their reception. Maria was no less busy in the kitchen; and the good old vicar had taken his station on the top of a hill, whence, in defiance of the drifting snow, he watched the approach of his children.

When Charlotte came near enough to distinguish her father waving his velvet cap in the air, and beheld his

silver locks floating on the wintry blast, Fernau was forced to remind her of her situation, and prevent her from springing out of the carriage; and when, on alighting, she threw herself into his open arms, he could only welcome her by a flood of tears. Their emotion having a little subsided, Fernau proposed his wife's re-entering the carriage; but this the old man decidedly opposed, declaring they must all walk home, that the peasantry, who had been long waiting in anxious expectation, might not be disappointed.

"But dear father," said Fernau, "only look at my wife; she must not fatigue herself too much." At first he had no idea of Fernau's meaning,—he looked in his daughter's face, and saw it blooming and lovely as before; but happening to follow the direction of her eyes, which she modestly cast down, he made the joyful discovery. An emotion of tenderness seized every heart; Charlotte was replaced in the carriage, and enjoined to salute the

neighbours who lined the road on both sides.

"I will take care," said the vicar, "to explain to them why you did not walk, otherwise they may think you are become the fine lady." Frederic tied his horse to the back of the carriage, and walked before it, following his father and Fernau. The postilion, at the request of the vicar, blew a cheerful march, which seemed to inspire him with youthful vigour. He swung his walking stick aloft in the air, and marched exultingly onward.

The man having finished his piece, was led, either by accident or design, to play the solemn hymn of "Praise the Lord all ye people," when the old man, suddenly assuming an air of pious gravity, took off his cap, and folding it between his uplifted hands, devoutly accompanied the postilion with a low voice till he reached his own house; where meeting his wife, he exclaimed with returning emotions,

"You are a grandmother, and our Charlotte is in perfect health!" At these words the fond mother's attention was divided between her daughter and the little stranger; anxious as she was to press her dear child to her heart, she stifled her eagerness as well as she could. She would not permit Charlotte either to alight immediately from the carriage, or be lifted down, but desired Maria to fetch her a chair, by which she might descend with greater facility; charging her at the same time every instant not to slip, nor to hurry, &c. &c.

A few happy weeks fled at the parsonage like a few short hours. Charlotte was in reality no less delighted than her good parents, notwithstanding she had been once or twice seized with *ennui*, an enemy before unknown under the parental roof. This she attributed however to her total want of occupation, and requested her mother to let her assist Maria in the domestic concerns.

What, go into the gloomy kitchen! How easily she might slip, or the stone floor might give her cold! In fact she was scarcely suffered to move either hand or foot; and if she ventured to walk from one chair to another, she was followed with half a dozen pillows or cushions.

Fernau was fully sensible of the effect which such daily and hourly proofs of love and tenderness must have on the susceptible heart of his wife, and as the time of returning home drew nigh, he felt very reluctant to put her in mind of their departure. For this reason he deferred mentioning the subject for several days, and was at length agreeably relieved from his uneasiness by Charlotte's observing, that as she knew he had much business and many appointments in town, she would by no means abuse his kind indulgence, but was ready to attend him whenever he pleased.

A kind altercation now ensued, in which, Fernau, charmed with his wife

complying disposition, assured her he had nothing to do in town which he should for a moment put in competition with her happiness. But she at length assured him it was her own wish to return: for she felt herself affected from the want of that exercise to which she had been accustomed since her marriage. This was the first falsehood she uttered in her whole life; and though she blushed deeply when she said it, Fernau had no suspicion of her being impelled by a motive she could not avow. Charlotte felt herself indeed now as she had ever done before—blessed in the love of all around her—but *love* alone was now insufficient for *her* happiness, who had been so long used to—admiration! She thought she disregarded it, nay even despised it, and yet she felt the want of it.

The separation on the day of departure was the more affecting, as Frederic was shortly going to the university. "Take care of yourself," said the mother, imprinting the last kiss on the cheek of her

weeping daughter; "your peace, your prosperity, may add many a year to my existence!"

"Remember that!" said her father, giving her his last blessing: "you may gladden my declining age by prolonging your mother's life."

Elevated with the thought of becoming more and more worthy of that affection and confidence, which constituted once her pride and her pleasure, she felt the consciousness of unspotted innocence to be still in her possession, though well aware that she had lost her native bashfulness and artlessness of manners; was no longer averse to balls or plays; nor turned a deaf ear to the adulation of every fop who paid homage to her charms. But was that criminal? Was it not a natural consequence of fashionable life? Nay more,—did not her husband scold her whenever her grave deportment kept her admirers at an awful distance? On one point she could not however so easily

console herself. She had in the commencement of her marriage made a resolution of laying up half the money Fernau allowed her for her own use, until she had saved enough to defray the expences of her mother's journey to Naples; or, in case she could not accomplish that purpose, to send what she could spare to her brother at the university. This resolution she had abandoned in a few months, and had even long since spent the small portion she had saved.

These reflections accompanied her on her return to her own house, and caused her many a restless hour. On such occasions she always endeavoured to throw the blame on her husband, for whom she could never be too variously or too elegantly dressed; and on whose account she had often purchased many superfluous articles, in the hope of doing credit to him and his family. In this she was not altogether mistaken; for Fernau regarded

her in some respects as a doll, which he daily loaded with fresh ornaments, and for which he often purchased things far above his income. He had himself sown in her spotless heart the seeds of vanity, which not only contaminates, but ultimately choaks up every virtue.

An important circumstance, however, which Charlotte entirely passed over in this self-examination was, that she now obeyed her husband with too much readiness; that she no more remonstrated against their present way of life; and that had he proposed any other, it would certainly have given her some uneasiness. But nothing could be farther from his thoughts. He was as vain of her beauty as a mother of her first child; hung upon her with the fond eye of an adoring lover, and was proud of every new conquest she made. Immersed in a continual round of pleasure, his happiness was hardly capable of in-

crease, when Charlotte became the mother of a daughter, who in her cradle promised to equal herself in beauty.

At first his transport was indescribable. He almost smothered the little innocent with his eager caresses, and seemed even to envy it the sleep into which it had not been lulled in his arms; but he soon reflected that his daily triumph was, by this event, for some time suspended; and trembled lest it should diminish that beauty whence he derived all his happiness. No means were neglected, no precaution omitted to prevent so direful an event! On no account would he permit her to perform the sacred duty of nourishing her infant from her own bosom. Hence arose the first serious difference betwixt Charlotte and Fernau. Previous to her delivery she had given him a promise not to suckle her babe, and the fulfilment of this promise he now peremptorily demanded. In vain she urged the before unexperienced power of mater-

nal feelings, in the hope of obtaining a release from her engagement. In vain she represented to him the effect which the first cry of the helpless infant has on its mother's heart, and the impossibility she felt in herself of resigning this sweet task to a hireling. Fernau, deaf to reason and remonstrance, obstinately persisted in his first determination, and Charlotte at length made the sacrifice which, in private, she lamented with bitter tears. How joyfully would she now have renounced every gaiety in the great world to have been a mother in her native village. She observed with a melancholy smile Fernau's puerile joy on leading her again, more fresh and blooming than ever, amidst the throng of gazing coxcombs. That vanity which had been subdued by maternal affection, was long in resuming its dominion in her heart.

Yet, when this arch enchantress enters into a league with a beloved husband's ardent wishes, demanding as a duty fresh

offerings at her shrine, what female heart, unwarned and unheeded, can withstand the all-powerful charm?—Thus did Fernau's silly passion gradually undermine in Charlotte that purity of heart which is the sister of innocence—and alas for that innocence which feels itself thus unshielded!

But the seeds of early principle and virtue which had long taken root in the tender heart of Charlotte, were not to be dislodged without many a pang. She felt herself no longer the happy guileless creature that she had been, and sought in a continual round of intoxicating diversions to be abstracted from herself. A thousand times had she resolved on spending one whole summer in the tranquil abode of her parents; and there, in the bosom of nature, to regain the lost jewel. Nay, she had even sometimes proceeded so far as to announce her speedy arrival to her anxiously expecting parents—but; the monster vanity, like a polypus, encircled

her with his thousand arms.—She plunged deeper and deeper into the gulph of dissipation, and found no content out of the tumult of the great world. Every day brought new diversions that daily became more necessary to her. She taxed her ingenuity to invent pretexts for the postponement of her journey, by which she deceived herself as well as her parents. Her letters to them became shorter, colder, and less frequent; and even her child, the darling idol of her affections, on whom she had but a few weeks before so fondly hung, was now more than half forgotten.

One day—just two years after her first happy visit—she received an affecting letter from the old vicar, written on his seventy second birth-day, in which he asked her if he were doomed to leave this world without beholding his dear grand-daughter. "I and your mother," says he, "employ evenings in gilding apples for the ensuing christmas festival, and Maria is

dressing a doll for which your mother has cut off some of her own hair, that it may have a smart head-dress: for we feel persuaded, that we shall bless you and your dear infant for the last time. Your brother will spend his vacation with us, and then our old age will be once more gladdened with the presence of all our children. I entreat you, my dear Charlotte, to come quickly; with us, it will soon be evening! The day is far advanced!"

The wandering heart of Charlotte was agitated by these last words. The journey was now irrevocably fixed, and every necessary preparation rapidly completed; when Fernau one evening returned and informed his wife that count Schmieg had been giving him an account of a grand fête, with which the prince was to be surprised at the opera house on the evening of new year's day. "You," continued he, "have doubtless heard the news which is just arrived, of the peace being ratified. The troops who have fought so bravely

are now returning; and this joyful event is to be represented by the nobility of both sexes. The gentlemen are to personate grenadiers, hussars, dragoons, &c. and the ladies, suttlers, &c. Bacchus will be drawn riding on a field piece, and the procession is to close with a triumphal car, in which the goddess of peace, drawn by genii, (for one of which, count Schmieg is training his own son) and surrounded by allegorical figures—representing agriculture, trade, friendship, and plenty,—will crown the prince with a wreath of laurel, and deliver him a short complimentary verse—'and you, my lovely Charlotte, they have pitched upon to represent the goddess."—

"I!"—said she, in a tone of surprise, while delight flashed from her eyes.

"Yes,—you, and you only. Count Schmeig says, that none but the most beautiful woman in the town can perform this character, and declares, there is none in whom so much sweetness and dignity

are combined—to the truth of which, no one can so heartily subscribe as myself."

"I hope," said Charlotte, hesitatingly, "that you have positively refused it—our journey you know—"

"Yes I know,—and so I told him; but he thought it might be deferred for a few days.—It is certainly a great mark of distinction: for among all the persons present, you would be the only one not of noble extraction, and yet would sustain the principal character. But I have not given any promise."

"You did very wisely," replied Charlotte, "for we must positively—"

"Well—you can think of it," interrupted Fernau. "I have told the count, he shall have a definite answer to-morrow. I own I am rather taken with him, and am ashamed of the prejudice I once had against him. It is impossible to conceive a man more polite and agreeable.—I dare say, the whole casino envied me the the private conference I had with the prince's favourite."

It was evident, that the good Fe
felt himself flattered by the homage
to his wife, and heartily wished the j
ney might be deferred until after the
tival triumph of new-year's day, whic
expected would exceed every thing
had hitherto enjoyed. However, he n
the matter no farther this evening;
retiring to his room to write letters,
Charlotte in the most violent stru
between filial affection and her va
On one hand was the triumphal car, d
rated with olive branches, whence
could look down on the admiring m
tude—on the other her old father, an
sickly mother at the decline of life, d
ing up a doll for her infant. There
not a moment in which her fancy wa
busied with these images. A day so
or later, whispered vanity, can be o
consequence.—"The day is far advan
(cried her heart aloud) think if thy fa
should be suddenly called hence." I
shuddered and fell asleep, resolvin
think no more of the fête.

Most people flatter themselves with the belief, that they possess principles, powers of reflection, and the capability of resolving; vainly imagining that what they think *to-day*, they shall think *to-morrow*. But the truth is, that no human being will continue to hold the same opinions at the age of fifty, as he embraced at twenty: for should he love and hate as he might have done then, he will love and hate in a very different manner; nor, perhaps, can any one be precisely of the same mind to day, that he was yesterday, or will be to-morrow. It is possible, for a man to act to day, according to the resolution he made yesterday, and that without altering his opinions; but his views of the matter, his inclination or disinclination, will be modified by the manner in which he has digested, slept, or amused himself—nay, perhaps, from incidents even still more trivial.

Moritz, in his magazine on the knowledge of the soul, mentions a man who walked backward and forward on the ram-

parts of a town within a certain distance. When going towards the east the heavens were dark and cloudy, like his own mind, which was now oppressed with a double weight of gloom; on returning towards the west, the sun had tinged the sky with his roseate tints, and his mental views were illumined by the rays of hope. Thus was he at the mercy of the clouds in the east, or of the rosy colouringin the west; and felt despair or consolation, as he paraded this way or that. How far this condition of the human mind may redound to our honour, I will not pretend to decide; but much may be said both for and against it.

However, as nobody likes to read a great deal about the same thing, the little which has been said may serve as an introduction to the avowal, that Charlotte's first thoughts the next morning were occupied with the fête. The conflict recommenced, and in spite of various hints and insinuations of Fernau, would have ended, as might have been expected from

a virtuous wife, and an affectionate daughter, if a flaming equipage had not at this critical moment driven up to the door. A footman covered with silver lace announced a visit from count Schmieg. Charlotte wished to avoid being seen, as she was only in an undress; but her husband assured her, with great gravity, that a person of his rank would take no denial; and without waiting her reply, ran to receive and conduct him to her apartment.

Count Schmieg was a worn-out libertine, who had been for many years the prince's ambassador at the court of Venus; in plain terms, the prince's pimp—and consequently his favourite; abhorred by every honest man, and execrated by the country at large. He knew but one blessing—*court favour*—but one method of obtaining it—*servility*. Every faithful servant of the country he treated with insolence and arrogance; and cordially embraced the most atrocious villains, if of a description to

serve his base purposes. He maintained his favour with the capricious prince, by constantly supplying him with fresh food for his lust; in which honourable employment, the countess, his faithful helpmate, was ever ready to assist, both by word and deed. The lady's penetrating eyes discovered, in an instant, the most evanescent symptoms of dissatisfaction in the princely features; of which she was equally alert to apprise his lordship, who began his marauding among the daughters of the land for fresh prey for the purpled monster.

It was at one of these junctures that count Schmieg found it convenient to court the friendship of Fernau. One wretched victim, who a few months before had bartered innocence and character for princely favour, abandoned by her rigid mother, and tortured by the stings of conscience, had made a voluntary sacrifice of her life, by plunging into a canal which wound through one of his highness's parks; and which thus furnished a perpetu-

al monument of her short-lived triumph. She left a letter behind her, every line of which bespoke the bitterest repentance. This however the count thought proper to intercept, having felt some slight uneasiness himself, on perusing its contents. The intelligence was conveyed to the physician of the household, who reported to his sovereign, that the lady had been suddenly seized with a fit of derangement—on which his highness was pleased to observe; "Really!—humph!—It is a great pity! She was a pretty genteel girl!"

To procure a successor to this pretty genteel girl was both easy and difficult,—easy—in as much as there are, notwithstanding the numberless fatal examples which daily offer, always silly creatures, who will meet seduction half way, and joyfully exchange a transient pleasure for durable remorse—difficult—in as much as the prince's relish for such fare had been blunted by continual excess, and now required the most transcendent luxury of

charms to dissipate that listlessness, of which he had lately given strong symptoms.

In vain had count Schmieg introduced two lovely girls to his highness's notice, whose attractions a year before, would certainly have kindled a flame in his high and mighty bosom; but now—one was too pale—the other too florid—one too bashful—the other too bold!

This change in the prince's habitual feelings already augured consequences alarming to the count's projects. His highness being one day disappointed by bad weather of going to the chace, suddenly made his appearance in the council chamber, and heard himself styled the father of his people. Besides this, he had signed a proclamation recommending the vaccine innoculation to his subjects. But what was even more threatening than this apparent interference in public concerns was, an unexpected visit which he paid to his consort, which lasted for above an hour. Nothing could be more unlucky

than this incident: for it was well known, that the princess was a lady of exalted worth, who bore her hard destiny with becoming dignity, and yet possessed sufficient discretion and gentleness to avail herself most effectually of the intervening moments of reason in the prince, to unshackle him from the bondage of libertinism.

In this extremity, count Schmieg bethought himself of Mrs. Fernau, whom the prince had not yet seen. He instantly made the necessary enquiries respecting her, and found that her reputation indeed was unblemished; but that she was a slave to her own vanity and her husband's silly passion of seeing her universally admired. He cunningly concluded therefore, that by playing dexterously upon these weaknesses, he might contrive to introduce Charlotte to his princely master in the full blaze of beauty; and in such a manner as to overwhelm him in one powerful sensation of surprise and admiration. That a

vain woman,—the daughter of a country clergyman, could for a moment withstand the homage paid to her by a prince, in the presence of his whole court, was a suspicion which never once entered the head of his excellency. The grand point therefore, was, to obviate the trifling scruples which Charlotte might feel, at appearing in so distinguished a situation. This was in truth no great difficulty for this supple courtier and veteran gallant, who had grown grey in the art of dressing up the vilest falsehoods in the garb of sincerity, and in giving to proposals the most infamous an air of refined delicacy. Ill fated Charlotte! How did thy wavering resolution, which had been just before in triumph over its hard-earned victory, now tremblingly shrink from this new and unexpected attack.

After discussing the subject for a long time, Charlotte could not help thinking, that, as there yet remained fourteen days to the new year, she could make her pro-

mised visit to her parents, and return soon enough for the intended festival. This suggestion, which so happily reconciled the execution of the two projects, was her last resource; but the subtle count drove her instantly from this ill-defended post, by representing that the endless preparations for such a splendid exhibition, would necessarily occupy the greater part of her time: for besides her dress, which he artfully described to her in glowing colours, it would be requisite (he said) that she should rehearse her part in common with the other performers. He offered at the same time, to send an express to her parents, to inform them, that her determination of visiting them remained unshaken; but that being prevailed upon, by the earnest solicitations of her friends, to assist in an innocent public diversion, designed as a relaxation to the prince, from the hard duties of his paternal office, she was obliged, though very reluctantly, to defer seeing them, for a short time longer. The representation was too powerful and allur-

ing for the irresolute Charlotte. She yielded; and the count took his leave with a grin of joy, promising to send the court-dress maker immediately, to receive her commands.

This important personage, who was no less master of the heathen mythology, than of his own profession, soon made his appearance, and displayed before the admiring Charlotte an endless choice of silks and gauzes, with all the glittering gewgaws of fashion. The weighty deliberations on cut and colour now absorbed all the faculties of the intoxicated fair one, and utterly effaced from her mind every remaining scruple.

The performers, as count Schmieg had observed, were now almost daily assembled at the houses of the different nobility, not only to rehearse the different parts, but to arrange the order of the procession. Charlotte thus found herself suddenly in a circle, where notwithstanding she was the only stranger, and unprotected by her husband, every eye met hers

with a look of friendliness, and every ear was open to catch the words that dropped from her tongue; where the men sincerely paid the homage due to her charms, and the women addressed her by the kind and tender epithets of "my love," and "my dear." She was enchanted with this universal gentleness, affability, delicacy, and vivacity, so congenial to her own feelings, and accepted every compliment or act of civility as the genuine offspring of an uncorrupted heart. Little did she suspect that this courtly deportment disguised the bitterest envy, and that her officious admirers assumed the mask of friendship in order the more effectually to glut their revenge on the humiliation that was preparing for her. Every one was sensible that the protegée of count Schmieg, who was now obtruded on their notice, was only a fresh victim, which he was dressing up for sacrifice, at the altar of the prince's lust. Charlotte alone was ignorant of this, and was happy.

The moment so ardently wished for arrived, in which the goddess was to triumph. Charlotte, who had just attained her nineteenth year, was elevated on a golden car; a silver gauze floated round her fine form, a velvet cestus encircled her slender waist, and a diamond clasp blazed under her jutting bosom. An olive branch was gracefully entwined in her light tresses. In her right hand she bore a laurel wreath, and in her left, a palm branch. Plenty poured out his full horn at her side, and the god of traffic waved his wand over her head. Her car was slowly drawn through the saloon by winged seraphs adorned with garlands of roses, preceded by beautiful girls of the first rank, who, dancing in fantastic mazes, bestrewed the ground with the choicest flowers, and in soft strains of solemn music, announced the approach of the cavalcade, which passed betwixt double rows of party coloured masks. All eyes hung enraptured on the goddess of the fête.

The prince, who had in reality neither known nor surmised any thing of the project, was agreeably surprised at the scene; but satiated, from long habit, with every varied species of pleasure, he continued fixed in the place to which he had been conducted, with a composure bordering on indifference. The procession advanced; soldiers bearing olive branches; suttlers with infants, &c. &c. passed on, and were succeeded by others who encompassed the car. As it stopped before the prince, the ranks opened on both sides; and the goddess modestly leaning forward, let the wreath drop on the princely brow, pronouncing at the same time, a complimentary stanza, which, however trite, he appeared to receive as new, and pointed from the lovely lips, by which it was uttered. His highness had been always ready on such occasions with an appropriate repartee; but now, he had not a word at command, and stood like a school boy making one bow

after another in swift succession; nor did it even occur to him to take the wreath from his head, till long after the procession was concluded.

"Gracious heavens! What a charming woman!" exclaimed he, in a transport of admiration, putting his laurel, in the confusion of his mind, on a harlequin who stood next him. He seized count Schmieg by the arm, and hurried him out of the saloon. Fernau, in the habit of a Venetian, had forced his way close to the prince, to observe the impression which the beauty of his wife would make upon him. On hearing the involuntary exclamation, he swam in an ocean of extasy.

"A charming woman indeed!—if I were not her husband I would blow my brains out: but—this divine creature, so adored by the prince, is *mine*—is *my* Charlotte, who, upon the slightest hint, would follow me into the deepest solitude, and elevate me by her endearments to the happiest of men."

In this soliloquy, he was interrupted by an unexpected and gentle tap on the shoulder, accompanied with the words—"*I give you joy.*" Fernau turned round and instantly recognised Miss Holla, who, attired as a Circassian, bid defiance to all the writers on her adopted country, and now took off her beautiful mask to whisper a malicious congratulation in the ear of her cousin.

"Is it you, my witty cousin," said Fernau, with indescribable good nature, "may I beg to know on what event you congratulate me?"

"On your honourable connexion just formed with the prince."

"*I?*—with the prince?" looking at her with a broad stare.

"Yes—you to be sure. Are you then ignorant that count Schmieg is the Mercury of our Jupiter?"

Fernau stood aghast, and trembled in every limb; while fire flashed from his eyes. He was on the point of making a

bitter reply; but the recollection of miss Holla being Charlotte's unsuccessful rival, and of her father's recent bankruptcy, fortunately stifled his rising resentment. He now saw her sunk to a state, whence neither poetry nor spouting could raise her, and his anger was converted into pity and contempt. The only reply he condescended to make her, was a look expressive of his feelings. She felt its full force, and concealing her chagrin under a loud laugh, disappeared among the motley throng, mortified at having failed in her efforts to sprinkle the envenomed drops of jealousy into Fernau's cup of delight. His confidence in Charlotte's virtue was fixed as the polar star; and he fancied that the most evanescent thought on the subject would have a tendency to sully its purity.

"That every man should be in love with her, is the most natural thing in the world." These were the words with which he recommenced his soliloquy. "That the

prince will experience a similar fate this evening, is equally natural—and so much the better—it will be flattering to her—and a new source of exultation to me."

Well aware, however, of his cousin's malignity, he had one apprehension lest she should, by some means or other, convey such information to the vicar and his family, as would be destructive to their peace of mind. But on this ground, he might have rested secure. Miss Holla was fully capable, indeed, of such an action, could she have conceived it possible, that the old people would regard their daughter's dishonour as a misfortune; but being of a contrary opinion, she was anxious to suppress the intelligence, from an idea, that should the old vicar (whom she detested), once know of his daughter's introduction at court, he would derive a source of pleasure from the honour of such an intercourse. Though the seizure of her father's effects, therefore, had not prevented her attention to this point, she would

yet have been the last to make the discovery. Thus it is, that the *good* often escape the misery which the *bad* would be eager to inflict upon them, because the latter, fortunately, but erroneously, estimate the feelings of the former, by their own.

Fernau was again roused from his reflections by a crowd, which hurried him with the irresistable force of a torrent to the ball room; where his wife, surrounded by an admiring throng, was dancing a minuet with the prince. The envious Circassian was forgotten in an instant, and every faculty absorbed in contemplation of the charming goddess, who lightly glided along, like a zephyr among flowers. The continual murmur of applause, the rapture visible in the countenances of the spectators, the frequent acclamations of delight which resounded from all quarters, were alike gratifying to the fond husband and the licentious prince. For the remainder of the evening, the

latter attached himself exclusively to Charlotte. When the minuet was over, he seated himself by her side, conversing with her in the most polite and flattering manner, and fetching refreshments and presenting them to her with his own hand. He then led her out again, to whirl with him through the intoxicating circles of the licentious waltz.

Fernau, who had not been introduced to the prince, was fearful of being thought intrusive; and availed himself, therefore, of a moment when the prince was absent on the service of gallantry, to approach his wife. She no sooner saw him, than she affectionately exclaimed, "Thank God, I have found you at last—I almost thought you had forgotten me."

"Dearest of women," returned Fernau, "the prince has been with you the whole of the evening."

"His highness," replied she good naturedly, "is extremely condescending, and I am certainly much flattered by his attentions

—but if he terrify my Fernau from me, I shall assuredly forsake my Olympus in an instant, and descend to the level of a common mortal. But it must be late, continued she, shall we not return?" "Hush!" (said Fernau, who at that instant saw the prince approaching with a plate of oranges.). "Do not leave me," (whispered Charlotte, as her husband was retiring).

The prince discovered visible signs of dissatisfaction, at perceiving a gentleman speaking to Charlotte; and as his own marked attentions had kept off even her most intimate friends, he cast an angry look at him as he passed, which seemed to say, he expected from every one similar attentions. Either not observing it, or not wishing to observe it, she immediately arose, and with a dignified air, presented her husband to the prince. Instantly a dark cloud overshadowed his highness's visage. Count Schmieg had indeed casually mentioned, that the lovely goddess had a husband;

but in the tumult of heedless desire, which had so suddenly and impetuously carried him away, he had lost sight of this and many other little punctillios, which propriety and his own rank demanded of him. He however quickly felt the expediency of that dissimulation, in which he was so great a proficient; and turning to Fernau, as if agreeably surprised—"I am truly happy," said he, "to have at last the pleasure of meeting the man whose praises I have so often heard. But they call you a strange man, (continued his highness), and tell me you turn your large stock of knowledge to no other purpose, than that of strewing your own path with flowers; which I cannot help regarding as an injustice to your country. Do only consider, my dear Fernau, that if you are too affluent to want *my* services, *I* may perhaps, stand in need of *yours*. But rest assured, I shall not permit you to live much longer thus, at your ease. I shall certainly call you into actual service, as a

duty I owe to the state; and I hope your amiable wife will throw the force of her persuasions into my scale."

Fernau was as much stupified by this unexpected address, as if a thick cloud of smoke had been suddenly puffed in his face; and with difficulty stammered out a common place reply; which was no sooner ended, than his highness turning again to Charlotte, continued in the same tone—

"What say you, my charming goddess! You surely wish to deprive the state of a valuable citizen, that he may pass his life in sighing at your feet."

"Mr. Fernau," replied she, "was always fearful of supplanting those, who might be in need of such assistance."

The prince would take no denial. He bestowed such unaffected praises on the husband, enumerated the severe duties of his own situation with so much feeling, and seemed so sensibly impressed with his want of faithful and good servants, that the cre-

dulous Fernau was carried away captive. Never could he have imagined the prince to be so excellent a character. He now plainly saw, that all the burdens imposed on the people, were attributable to the wicked counsellors by whom he was misled. He was almost ready to fall at his feet, and implore his forgiveness, for having harboured a doubt of his patriotism; and when the prince continued to expatiate on the rights of the people, he hung with silent admiration on his words, and was almost vexed at Charlotte's reminding him again, that it was time to withdraw.

On their retiring, the prince was resolved on testifying his gratitude to the lovely woman who had been the ornament and support of the present fascinating scene, and accordingly attended her to the door of the saloon. Never did Jupiter envy Amphitrion's character more, than the prince did Fernau, at the instant of resigning his wife to his charge.

Whilst returning home, and when at

home, Fernau was lavish in his praises of the prince. This was acceptable to Charlotte, inasmuch as it seemed to justify her satisfaction in the prince's attention; though in reality, this pleasurable state of her feelings, might with more propriety have been ascribed to the gratification of her vanity. "Should he offer you a situation in the government," enquired she, "would you accept it?"

"I had made a firm resolution to live only for you and myself, as long as my income enabled me so to do.—But when *such* a prince calls me into active life—if I could render any service to my country, and—if (as I doubt not, will be the case) the circle into which we are now introduced, should considerably increase the expences of our living,—I would resign my present freedom; which, after all, is perhaps no better than a selfish indulgence."

Charlotte, though secretly pleased, made no reply. The thoughts of being raised by the exaltation of her husband, to a

higher rank, lulled her to a repose, which was rendered still sweeter by the dreams of gratified ambition.

On the following morning, the prince's page arrived, and presented her, in his master's name, with a myrtle wreath, ornamented with brilliants, in return for the laurel with which she had crowned him the evening before, and which had been carried away by the harlequin. The wreath was accompanied with a note, written by the prince's own hand, full of pretty allusions to the accordance of the laurel with the myrtle; such, indeed, as may be found in a hundred bridal poems.

Fernau saw nothing in the spirit of the note inconsistent with the respect due to a lady of unspotted character; but the instinctive delicacy of Charlotte, led her to perceive something equivocal in the style of writing, and still more so, in the costly present. She was, however, prevailed on to accept the wreath, but positively refused to return any answer. The

novel situation in which she was now placed, inspired her with a sort of foreboding, especially as she considered her husband as too confident to afford that support, on which she might securely rely. She anxiously sighed for the sage counsel of her father, and the affectionate advice of her mother; and determined, the next morning, to set out on the journey she so anxiously wished for.

Fresh obstacles again intervened.—The prince, in order to testify his supreme satisfaction with the splendid fête, resolved on giving a grand ball at one of his country houses, to which the company were to repair in sledges, and to return the same way by torch-light. His highness, of course, drove Charlotte in his own sledge. This was nothing more than a piece of politeness due to the lady, who had supported the principal character in the former procession. What a bustle and crowd of spectators near the street where Fernau lived, when the prince himself drove up

to this gentleman's house, in a splendid sledge! What raptures filled the breast of Fernau, at this ineffable condescension of his highness, which was enhanced to the utmost, by his requesting the former to occupy the vacant sledge of the master of the horse, and adding, that he knew the lovely woman would be incapable of enjoying a pleasure, of which he was not a partaker. What could plead louder the purity of his highness's intentions, than such a respectful regard to his feelings? Little did Fernau imagine, that Charlotte had explicitly informed count Schmieg, she would not accept the invitation with which the prince honoured her, on any other conditions.

A heavenly winter's day favoured the excursion, which, by exhilarating the prince's spirits, enabled him during the ride (which was a long one) to entertain his fair companion with an ardour, which, between the delicacy of her own feelings, and her reverence for the prince, requir-

ed her utmost skill, to restrain within proper limits. Splendor and taste presided over the entertainment. A hundred flaming torches created a new day, and lighted the return of the gay party; but the prince, who drove his own sledge, knew how to keep sufficiently behind the rest, to be enveloped in the shade of twilight. Under this shelter, he had sagaciously resolved to venture the first little freedoms. But even in the twilight, the rays of virtue dazzled the experienced libertine; and it was not without surprise, that he found it morally impossible to pass the boundaries which strict decorum prescribes. At length, he was obliged, much against his inclination, to content himself with the simple reward adjudged to him by the laws of gallantry on such occasions, and which was granted to his humble solicitations without prudery or affectation.

They did not reach Fernau's house before midnight. On handing Charlotte

out of the sledge, the prince enquired with an air of timid apprehension, when he might hope to see her again? and was informed to his terror, that she had resolved on setting out in two days, for a visit to her parents for a few months. He heaved a deep sigh, and was silent. With a still deeper sigh he pressed her hand, and remounting his sledge, drove home alone, and with feelings much disturbed.

For above half an hour, the marble walls of his palace re-echoed to his solitary footsteps, when it suddenly occurred to him to send for count Schmieg, who, leaping out of bed, in the utmost perturbation, and huddling on his dressing gown, presented himself profoundly bowing before his most gracious highness. The most gracious of sovereigns poured forth his lamentations to the most ungracious of subjects, who immediately, as in duty bound, descended into the very deepest recesses of his own bosom, and called forth a seasonable intrigue.

He accordingly made his appearance the next morning, in the habitation of the happy couple, whom he greeted with his usual undissembled friendliness. "How happy am I, my dear Fernau," he cried with an air of cordial participation, "to be the messenger of such joyful tidings as I am now charged to bring you from our excellent prince. The interview (during which, as before observed, Fernau had played so miserable a part) which his highness has had with you, has convinced him, that fame had not spoken loudly enough in your praise; and filled with a never-ceasing concern for the welfare of his state, he is anxious to see your brilliant talents in some manner devoted to the interests of his country. The delicate affair of determining the boundaries in the treaty of peace, with the neighbouring courts, is already assigned to count Windeck, the prime minister—but he being already advanced in years, it will be absolutely necessary for him to have the as-

sistance of an expert and active statesman; on which account, his highness has been graciously pleased to appoint you minister of the legation; and the only unpleasant circumstance attending this appointment, is, the necessity of accommodating yourself to a rather abrupt departure; a courier having arrived yesterday with the intelligence, that the delegates from the neighbouring courts were already at the appointed place of meeting.

Fernau was highly gratified by this distinguished mark of his prince's favour; and though he lamented his want of ability to fill so arduous a situation, yet he was easily persuaded by the count, to suppose himself perfectly formed for such a department, and promised to set out as soon as he had attended his wife to her parents.

"Impossible!" exclaimed the count, "the minister will set off to-morrow by day-break; and as he will expect to find you there before him, you ought in reali-

ty to leave town this evening; but I will adjust that matter with the prince for you, and at all events, you need not go before to-morrow morning, — no surely, not sooner."

Fernau cast an embarrassed look on Charlotte; which she perceiving, observed, "If the visit to my parents must be relinquished, I shall of course accompany my husband."

"Bravo! there is a wife!" exclaimed the count, clapping her on the shoulder, with a good-natured familiarity. "Admirable young creature, upon honour! and I assure you," turning to Fernau, "the sacrifice will not be insignificant: for in those cursed little towns near the frontiers, no accommodations, not even a bed is sometimes to be got; and what is still worse, one is frequently obliged to pass the night at a wretched village, which affords nothing but an alehouse kept by some Polish Jew; so I give you joy my

friend, of being the first diplomatic character who was ever accompanied by his wife."

"Can you for a moment conceive, count, that I would subject my wife to such inconveniencies? No, not for the universe. She remains here at all events."

"I shall do no such thing," replied Charlotte with great animation; "no—not if I and my child were compelled to pass the night in our carriage."

"Charming! upon honour, charming! That I must relate to his highness; and I am persuaded he will condescend to be highly affected with it. Apropos!—Mrs. Fernau has had the small-pox?"—

"O yes."

"That's well."

"But why does your excellency ask?"

"Only because that disorder rages on the frontiers at this time: the children are cut off by scores."

Charlotte turned pale. "Our little one," said Fernau, "has not been inocu-

lated. For this reason, my dear Charlotte, you must think no more of going.—You have duties to fulfil towards your infant; and these oblige you to remain here. Our separation cannot continue long. What think you, count?"

"Not above three or four months at farthest."

"Three or four months!" repeated Charlotte, starting, "It would be impossible for me to stay so long in town without you. I must go to my parents, even though I should, for the sake of company, travel in the stage."

Before Fernau could reply, the count asked where Charlotte's parents resided; and on being informed, he exclaimed with the fairest semblance of joy, "That suits to admiration! lady Schmieg is going to visit her sister at Munich, as soon as the roads are a little passable, and must, I dare say, pass this very village;—how happy she will be to offer you a place in her carriage! By heavens it suits to a

nicety! She will be quite overjoyed to set you down at your own door.—A tender hearted creature, she will never be able to witness the meeting without tears, *sur mon honneur*—she is one of the best women in the world—she has but one fault, and that is, she does not exactly suit the court. A word to the wise! suppose you were to drink tea with us—the whole plan could then be arranged." The invitation was accepted. "But, (continued the count,) I would advise you, my dear Fernau, to pay a visit to the minister, since he will *pro formâ* be your superior; that will not detain you long; after which we shall expect you at our house."

When this arch-hypocrite had left the credulous pair, Fernau tenderly embracing his wife, encouraged her to resign herself cheerfully to so short a separation, which promised so fair for their future advancement. "And should our family increase, (continued he, fondly pressing her to his bosom,) the sacrifice we now make will

enable us the better to provide for our children. At all events, this addition to our income is very opportune; for I own we live at present on rather too expensive a scale."

"For God's sake!" exclaimed Charlotte, "I hope——"

"Do not alarm yourself, my love; at present our circumstances are unimpaired, though I have had some anxious thoughts; but they have now entirely vanished."

"But why did you not inform me sooner?"

"Why should I give you needless pain? Now all will go well." With an ardent kiss Fernau prevented a reply, and hastened to dress himself for his visit to the minister.

Charlotte felt, in spite of all her efforts, an oppression at the heart, which often forced a tear from her eye. She was no doubt pleased with Fernau's promotion, but she felt the impropriety of remaining (however short the period,) in the vicinity

of the court during the absence of her husband, exposed to the venomous tongue of slander; nay, perhaps to proposals the most insulting: for it was not possible for her to conceal from herself that the prince's behaviour on a recent occasion, indicated feelings which, though flattering to her vanity, were hostile to her honour. Nor was this all—her heart (still the abode of innocence,) told her, that since her residence in the capital, she had indulged herself in a variety of freedoms, which though regarded as venial, and even innocent, among the giddy votaries of fashion, were yet infinitely beyond what she could have allowed herself in her native village. What if this thoughtless inattention to the rigid laws of decorum should grow into a habit, and ultimately engender still worse habits! Gracious heavens, what might be the consequence! No longer in possession of that virtuous confidence which was the companion of her girlish years, she resolved on soliciting Fernau's

permission to invite a distant relation of his, who was far advanced in years, to reside in the house with her, until lady Schmieg could conduct her to her parents; and till which time, she would, under pretext of indisposition, avoid all company, and shun even the sight of the prince altogether.

Her resolution once taken, she again regained some portion of her former tranquillity. At the appointed hour she drove to the house of the noble pair, who were already in expectation of her. Lady Schmieg, laying aside the haughtiness of the courtier, welcomed her with the most winning affability. "The count (said she) has informed me what an amiable companion he has provided for me. Nothing could have been more in unison with my wishes than to travel eighty miles with you, for that will be the true moment for becoming acquainted with each other better than we can ever expect to be all our lives in the great circles; which are,

in fact, nothing but great fantoccinis, where the smallest figures are magnified into giants by the reflection of a lamp; and the spectator, who sits in the dark, can never divine whether his silent neighbour is well or ill affected towards him. We ought never to judge of people by the part they act, or are compelled to act, on the theatre of life. Here is my domestic sphere—you must see me as wife, and mother—then perhaps I may be honoured with your esteem. I hear Mr. Fernau will set off to morrow; and as it may be some weeks before we can leave town, suppose, instead of hunting spectres in your solitary house, you were to come and make a part of our family—it is in fact on all accounts more eligible."

This very idea had suggested itself to Charlotte's mind; and now that it should be so unexpectedly realized, was a subject both of delight and surprise to her. The invitation was so kind, so cordial—their mode of living was so truly domesticated,

(three children being at that moment round the tea-table,) that Charlotte, in case of her husband's approbation, was altogether inclined to consent.

Fernau came soon after, not in the best frame of mind, owing to the cold but polite reception he had met with from the minister, who dismissed him almost immediately, without uttering a syllable on the subject of the business they were to transact together.

"Just like him!" cried count Schmieg; "he wants to have every thing his own way—would fill every situation with the creatures of his own fancy; but you must not pay any regard to it. He will be no better till business commences, he must then be sociable. Believe me, he behaves no better to the prince himself, who only keeps him in office out of regard to his long services, having been the minister of his late grandfather."

"But (resumed Fernau, somewhat tranquillized by Schmieg's information,)

the count's valet observed that no preparations were making for a journey, nor had any thing been said to him on the subject."

"Is it possible! (exclaimed the count, with an air of astonishment,) he will never be easy till he has drawn upon himself the prince's displeasure; and I will venture to predict, he will very soon receive a hint of it. To be sure, his business is only to subscribe the writings; and at all events, it can do no harm should you arrive a day or two before him; you will find plenty of employment."

Madame Schmieg now introduced the domestic arrangement of considering Charlotte as their own child, until they could resign her to her parents; in which the count acquiesced with that sort of air which takes your consent as a thing of course. Fernau cast a look on Charlotte, which in a moment satisfied him that the proposal met with her hearty concurrence. He felt therefore that nothing remained

for him, but to express his gratitude for their friendly attentions.

An unexpected interview with the prince, who just at this moment happened to call on count Schmieg, completely restored Fernau's serenity. His highness, as he informed them, having been disappointed of a ride by one of his grooms falling from his horse, he had immediately sent off for his own surgeon to help the poor fellow; and being at no very great distance, it occurred to him to give his favourite a call.

Surprised with finding his minister of legation there, he assured him of his high esteem in the most flattering and condescending terms, and earnestly recommended to him not to return nntil the conclusion of the business should enable his highness to bestow on him a reward proportioned to his services.

Of Mrs. Fernau his highness took less notice than usual; a circumstance which produced in her mind sensations far from

agreeable; though she could not help observing in some stolen looks a mixture of depression and embarrassment. He made but a short stay, and passing his hand over his forehead, suddenly exclaimed, "Adieu!" then clapping his new created minister on the back, and wishing him a good journey, left the house.

The following morning found the happy Fernau at a considerable distance from his own house, busied with fond schemes of future aggrandizement; and the following evening found the mournful and disconsolate Charlotte in the house of count Schmieg.

The prince and his favourite were now both pretty well assured, that, notwithstanding Charlotte's vanity, her virtue was not to be undermined by any vulgar means. They had therefore devised a farce, the first act of which was the removal of the officious husband. Count Schmieg distributed the characters, allotting to his wife the part of an affectionate

mother, a faithful wife, and of a character perfectly domestic. Her ladyship, ill as it accorded with her real disposition, performed it to admiration. Her conduct towards Charlotte was truly maternal. In their confidential conversations, she displayed to the view of her young friend her vast stores of knowledge and experience, which she had collected in the great world; often confessing herself guilty of many errors, which in such situations perhaps only a supernatural being could have avoided; but acknowledging at the same time, with a significant shrug, that many things, which in private circles would be esteemed not only strange, but actually bad, are in fact either really good, or at least justifiable. "Happy they, (she would sometimes exclaim with a sigh,) who can make their virtue the instrument of their own happiness, without ever feeling themselves called upon, for the attainment of higher ends, to sacrifice its semblance."

A sensation in Charlotte's bosom not easily defined, seemed to condemn this sentiment as dangerous—but did she not misconceive its meaning? Must there not be some truth in an assertion advanced by one whose morals were so pure and whose conduct was so irreproachable? Had she not already laid aside many prejudices and opinions which in her father's house she had regarded as so weighty? Was there the slightest ground for distrust, since the *decorum* as well as the refinement which reigned through every department of her household spoke loudly in in favour of her upright principles? How could she detect the subtle poison of vice, which lurked under the fascinating form of virtue?

Nor was the doating husband, the loving father, and virtuous citizen, less exquisitely performed by the count, who had chosen for himself these respectable characters. He was now obliged to spend whole evenings at home; to behave to his

wife and children with the most attentive kindness; to refrain from every species of loose conversation; to lay aside all familiarity with his chambermaids; and even sometimes to endure the reading of a sermon or moral essay. In a word, count Schmieg was transformed at once into a virtuous man; and lest the prince should undervalue the sacrifice, he more than once protested, that it would have been less disgusting to him, had he been called upon to prove his fidelity to his sovereign, by procuring for himself a fashionable disease from the lowest courtezan, than be required to ape virtues so foreign to his nature.

Upon this declaration, his highness was graciously pleased to remind him, that himself had undertaken the most difficult part. And yet not to paint Satan blacker than he really is, we must do the prince the justice to avow, that he belied himself to his favourite. The part which his highness had to perform with Charlotte became by

degrees more and more natural to him, till at length it proceeded naturally from the feelings of his heart. Nor did his noble friends suspect for a moment what was passing within his bosom. They regarded him as under the influence of a passion which they knew could assume any form it pleased. Little did they think him susceptible of a love which is capable of no deceit. He appeared to them in short, to be playing his part, as they were playing theirs. They instructed him to be a mute and pensive lover. He was to treat Charlotte with respect and diffidence, to prove that he did violence to himself by suppressing the agony that secretly consumed him. It was his part to convince her, that to him, virtue and innocence were sacred; that an uncontrolable and hopeless passion assumed the sway over his better judgment—and all this was to be expressed by his looks alone. His lips were to remain sealed, or to be opened only by accident, as if he were taken by

surprise, when a broken sentence might be allowed to escape—but in an instant they were to be closed again in silence. He was also, if possible, to blush, tremble, and cast his eyes on the ground. "Once or twice (said his sage counsellers,) your highness must appear to be wholly overpowered by the violence of your feelings, which, gaining the mastery over your reason, should break forth into a plain declaration of love; but in the next moment, as if struck to the heart by your own rashness, you must suddenly start from your seat, and without waiting for an answer, seize Charlotte's hand, press it to your heart and lips in an agony of despair, supplicate pardon, and, promising to guard yourself better in future, fly from her presence. "Such arms, (said the noble count,) wielded by a skilful hand, will, by the divine blessing, inevitably secure the victory!"

His highness daily visited at the count's, and the obliging countess took

care, by withdrawing on various pretexts, to give him free scope for the display of his theatrical powers; and when no such pretext could immediately be found, his excellency usually pinched one of his children, (in an anti-chamber,) until it screamed aloud, and drew the tender mother to the relief of her dear babe. But these opportunities were not always turned to the best advantage, and for this simple reason—that a spark of real love glowed amidst the tumult of his desires, like a sun-beam piercing the creviced window-shutter of a ball-room, eclipsing with its native lustre the artificial light of a hundred torches. The gentle call of love vibrating through his heart, imposed silence on the foul desires which fired his blood—desires which dared appear only in the absence of that unwelcome intruder. The strange conflict of new and contending emotions gave a touch of sweet melancholy to his interesting features, diffusing a soft languor over

his frame, and an anxious timidity through every action. This, though insufficient to overcome her virtue, was at least enough to awaken her compassion. What more flattering to female vanity, than to inspire a libertine and lawless heart with a durable and respectful passion? What more flattering than to behold a mighty prince, before unused to bridle a single feeling, now a prey to the most delicate and unconquerable passion—acknowledging no higher source of delight, than a compassionate and sympathizing look from the eye of the beloved object? And what more natural than for Charlotte to have reconciled her mind to the innocence of pitying a man, whose desires were at once so harmless and so gratifying? She did not consider that pity towards the avower of an illicit passion, is as dangerous to virtue as the acknowledgement of love.

Influenced by this feeling, she was no longer alarmed at the presence of the

prince—no more uneasy at the absence of the countess—no more started up in horror when he pronouuced the word LOVE! She merely heard the sound with downcast eyes, and sometimes even strove by gentle expostulation to conduct the prince back to reason; not aware that each conversation brought her a step nearer to that love which she was endeavouring to eradicate.

Yet with all this, Charlotte's intentions were still innocent, and her imagination untainted. Her conscience would sometimes whisper to her, that she listened to the prince with too much complacency; but she quieted these suggestions with the idea that she was quickly going to leave him, and that absence would restore her tranquillity.

But day after day passed away, and still the journey was under various pretexts postponed. One time the barometer portended stormy weather; another time the countess was engaged in purchasing the

presents she intended to take with her; and when finally the month of May arrived with all its blossoms and its sweets, the countess had the misfortune to be taken ill. And though her complaint wrought no change in her external appearance, which was clear and blooming as ever, yet she complained of low spirits and sleepless nights. She loathed all sustenance, and fed her lap-dog with the choice morsels which were carried to her dressing room. The prince's physician, who attended her, shook his head, significantly declaring that her ladyship's pulse was so high, that perfect tranquillity was the first requisite to her recovery. He enjoined her to avoid all exercise, except a gentle walk in her own apartment.

Travelling was now impossible; and the good countess seemed so much affected by the disappointment for herself, (not having seen her dear sister for so many years,) and still more so for Charlotte, who was thus prevented from visiting her

parents, that the latter found great difficulty in assuaging her grief by the assurance that the delay occasioned her not the slightest uneasiness; and in fact she was not far from the truth—she no longer so ardently wished to escape from that society which now afforded her, alas, but too much pleasure!

Count Schmieg pursued with an anxious eye the developement of the plot which he had so artfully laid. He was far from being dissatisfied with its slow progress, as during this interval he had unlimited control over every thing that was within the power of the prince. Yet he was well aware that the business must not be allowed to rest too long at one point. Like a skilful physician, therefore, who accustoms his patient to the use of laudanum by daily increasing the dose, he proceeded cautiously to another measure, by advising the prince to try the efficacy of presents a second time. Hitherto he had of course abstained from such offers,

from a delicacy which was produced indeed from the refined feelings which he had discovered in Charlotte. Still under the influence of these feelings, he felt no less reluctance in offering than she in accepting. Many a casket of jewels which had been conveyed to her toilette in the morning, she returned to him in the evening; nor would he have ever succeeded in making one present, had he not brought Fernau in question, whose services he professed to recompence in this delicate manner.

The acceptance of *one* present, under any pretext whatever, naturally led to that of another. With a dejected air he protested, that this was the only mark of her favour which he either hoped or expected to receive, and confirmed his protestation by an appeal to her former compliance.

Having happily succeeded in conquering the first sentiments of shame in Charlotte's mind, he attempted to convince

her every day, and with more and more success, that she was doing an act of simple charity by the acceptance of his presents. Although at the time she appeared to receive them with reluctance, yet she could not help feeling some acknowledgment to him for his generosity. Nor was it the bare gratification of vanity which gave rise to this feeling; for she was enabled secretly to convert some of the richest diamonds she had received into money, and sent it to her brother at the university, without letting him know the source whence it flowed. She was well aware of his straightened circumstances, from what he had communicated to her in confidence, and knew that it was impossible for her poor parents to afford him any more support. She knew, likewise, that in order to avoid distressing them, he often spent whole nights in translating and copying, for a miserable pittance. Deluded with this idea, she now began even to make a merit of acceptance, which

had before apeared to her criminal. Shame, and a sense of her own dignity, were from this moment lost in schemes of benevolence; and when she surveyed her jewels she began to calculate how soon she might raise enough to defray the expences of her mother's journey to Naples, resolving that nothing should be spared to render it both respectable and commodious. She was at the same time certain that Fernau could not have a single objection. Poor Charlotte! the seducer has indeed gained much, since you no longer shun the means of seduction!

Count Schmieg, informed by his faithful spouse of all that Charlotte confidentially poured into her friendly bosom, grinned like an assassin, who has allured his victim by cries for help into the solitude of a wood. He now thought it time to spread a new net of still finer texture, in which he was greatly aided by a circumstance that occurred accidentally. He seated himself one day at table with a

countenance which had cost a full hour's practice before the looking glass. It was gloomy, and yet contained a mixture of sorrow. He was silent and thoughtful; a half suppressed sigh sometimes escaped him. He would now and then scratch the edge of his plate with a vacant stare, as if unconscious of every surrounding object. Charlotte observed him with mingled emotions of alarm and curiosity; and when unable to suppress her feelings any longer, she appealed by a significant look to the countess for an explanation. Her ladyship eyed him attentively, and then inquired the cause of his agitation.

The count stared her full in the face for a second or two, as if unable to collect himself; then answered with a deep-drawn sigh, "O, I have witnessed such a scene!—It has pierced my very soul! Nor can I for a moment banish the images of woe from my imagination." The ladies having finally prevailed on him to inform

them of the particulars, he related as follows:

"As I was this morning riding along the bank of the river, I suddenly saw a crowd of people carrying a man whom they had just dragged out of the water. He was apparently lifeless; I sent for a surgeon, and ordered every means to be used for his restoration. At length animation returned—he opened his eyes, but it was only to curse his deliverers. 'It is barbarous, (said he) to restore me to fresh torments.' I found he was the clerk of the treasury, who had been deprived of his place about half a year before for a deficiency in his accounts, which had been occasioned by a mistaken act of kindness towards a treacherous friend. The prince is satisfied the man acted from no bad motive; but as many similar affairs have taken place of late, his highness thinks proper to overcome his private feelings for the public benefit.

This poor fellow, therefore, has been made an example, to deter others. Having a a wife and six children, and seeing himself deprived by the loss of character, from getting a livelihood, he took the desperate resolution of ending his miserable existence, rather than live to witness his family's distress.

"While we were endeavouring to recover him, some officious persons carried the intelligence to his wife, who in an agony of despair, and followed by six weeping infants, rushed into the room, and wildly threw herself on her half-dead husband; while the ragged infants supplicated with uplifted hands that we would give them back their father!"

"And what have you done?" sobbed Charlotte.

"I gave my purse just for the present exigence—more was not in my power. Willingly would I petition the prince in their behalf; but the last time I pleaded for them, his highness forbad me, under

pain of his serious displeasure, ever to mention them again. God only knows who influenced the prince to an act of severity so foreign to his compassionate nature. I can do no more; my income is small, and I have, myself, a wife and children."

Charlotte was silent; but her cheek glowed, and her eye sparkled—an idea crossed her mind which her better judgment attempted to expel, but was overruled by pity and benevolence. Her resolution was taken; and just as the count rose to retire, Charlotte asked the name of the unfortunate man. He quickly perceived the success of his scheme. In the evening, when the prince came, Charlotte for the first time sought an opportunity of being alone with him, and petitioned for the reinstatement of the disgraced clerk. The prince appeared surprised—his aspect became serious; but he caught her hand, saying, "TO YOU I GRANT IT—NO OTHER DARED TO HAVE ASKED IT."

With grateful joy she thanked and blessed him for his beneficence, allowing him to cover the hand he still held, with burning kisses. "But shall it be done now, this night?" asked Charlotte, with a supplicating look. His highness wrote a note to this purport, and dispatched it immediately. At that instant her heart throbbed with new and indescribable emotions, which she was compelled to relieve by a soft and gentle effusion of tears. From that hour she contemplated the prince with a satisfaction which enchanted him; for it was he who had bestowed on her those exquisitely sweet sensations.

On the following morning, before Charlotte had left her dressing room, the now happy family were waiting in the antichamber to thank their benefactress. Full of surprise, she desired to know who had informed them of her mediation?

They had received their pardon, as they

were expressly told, through her goodness.

"I cannot see them," said Charlotte, "they must thank the prince, who is their benefactor."

But the good people refused to go until they had returned their thanks to her; partly from the impulse of their own feelings, and partly, as they had been repeatedly charged on no account to omit it. She at length yielded; and the wretched half-starved family entering her apartment, the mother fell at her feet;—the children surrounded her on their knees, and the youngest, a girl about three years old, repeatedly kissed her little hand as she had been previously taught. The father kept at a little distance, and with an embarrassed yet grateful air, stood squeezing his hat together with his hands; but as no one had power to do any thing but weep, he broke silence with the exclamation of "God for ever bless you,

madam, and grant that you may receive consolation!"—he had nearly said—"and tenfold reward in heaven! Come, children, we will not distress the lady any longer—" for he saw that Charlotte, (who fondly pressed the children to her heart, and slipped a purse into the hand of the little one,) was deeply affected. She hastened to her boudoir to give vent to her feelings, not heeding the look of reproach which the man's countenance betrayed, under an air of humility.

It was evident that this scene had operated powerfully in the prince's favour; Charlotte's conduct towards him became more embarrassed, and somewhat anxious, (symptoms which gave count Schmieg great hopes of a speedy conquest.) She had no longer resolution to oppose little freedoms, which she before used to resent, and frequently left the prince in quiet possession of her hand for minutes together.

While things were in this posture, his

highness one day requested the count, if possible, to procure some more distressed persons, who might apply to Charlotte for relief; but he seemed to fear that this would cost him infinite pains, for that his highness had been for the last ten years compared to Titus and Marcus; and that the wish of Henry the Fourth of France, for every peasant to have his capon daily at the fire, was actually realized in his highness's happy country. All which his highness was well pleased to believe. The count, however, solemnly assured him that he would spare neither time nor trouble, and should there be any unfortunate beings yet in the prince's territories, he would never rest till he had discovered them. Although this was an occupatiou altogether new to the oount, yet he succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectations of his gracious employer, and crowds of distressed objects daily presented themselves in Charlotte's anti-chamber. Charlotte was never weary

of supplicating, nor the prince of granting relief. So much distress was daily relieved, (real or artificial no matter,) such large sums distributed in acts of benevolence, as to produce a very serious remonstrance from every department of the treasury.

"You now see, my dear friend," said the countess Schmieg one day to Charlotte, "the power you possess over the prince. In fact his attachment to you has converted him into a different being. O! what an angel of goodness he might be to this oppressed country, if you had but the will!"

"If I had the will!" (repeated Charlotte,) that I am sure I have, if I knew but how!"

"I doubt it, (replied the artful countess,) for to attach the prince entirely to yourself, and prevent him from being weary of doing good, you must resolve to make a sacrifice, which the prejudices of your education would represent as

destructive to your peace of mind; perhaps even your tender conscience might take alarm, and prevent you from seeing the extent of that good which your generosity might effect."

"Do I comprehend you right?"—said Charlotte, blushing more from modesty than anger. "Can you possibly advise——"

"I advise!—I advise nothing, my love: for before I could advise, I must impart to you my ideas on certain subjects."

"You would then approve——"

"Upon certain conditions, I should."

"And not despise me?"—

"The contrary—I should admire you for possessing so much self-government."

"Nothing under heaven could sanction such a conduct."

"Just what I expected, (exclaimed the countess, laughing good naturedly,) we differ on this point. And yet I trust, that although we differ in *conceptions*, our *feelings* are precisely the same. We must

allow that nature has largely gifted the female world with the materials of benevolence. Man, it is true, offers up his time and labour, perhaps his life, for the good of thousands; but woman often effects as much by renouncing merely the appearance of virtue."

"The *appearance*?—only the appearance?"

"Nothing more, my sweet friend."

"Surely you make virtue to consist in the opinions of the world, and not in conscious rectitude; but I am sorry to say that we too often mistake the appearance for the reality."

"I blame no one for wishing to keep up the appearance as long as possible. It is seldom difficult; but in the present case perfectly easy."

"I entreat your excellency not to regard it as a possible case."

"As you please, my dear. I shall respect you alike in all cases. Yet I must confess, I really pity our excellent prince, who is now in love for the first time,

and that with a fervour which might be a blessing to thousands. The princess, to whom (though a sensible and good woman,) he was united merely from political motives, introduced the subject herself to me the day before yesterday. 'His royal highness (said she,) is astonishingly altered of late. He treats me when he calls with a kindness—nay, I may almost say, with a tenderness, which has long been a stranger to me. I know he is attached to Mrs. Fernau, of whom I daily hear so many encomiums; and perhaps it is to her influence I am indebted for the little portion of happiness I now enjoy. Tell her she possesses my warmest esteem, and that I have not a more ardent wish than to see her closely connected with the prince: for I regard it as the means of ensuring my own felicity, and that of my people.'"

"Let it be granted, (returned Charlotte,) that the prince's attachment to me can effect so much—why, then, must

another sacrifice be made, which will rob me for ever of my peace?"

"For this plain reason—a passion so ardent is not likely to rest in a state of inaction; it must either be satisfied, or it will plunge into fatal excesses. Heaven preserve us from this evil, which will be fatal to my fondest hopes."

"YOUR HOPES, madame Schmieg?"

"Yes, my dear, my hopes; inasmuch as I am enthusiastically attached to my country, and so fervently wish for its happiness and prosperity. You know that the greatest part of the peasantry are still in a state of vassalage; which, when I reflect upon the enlightened state of all Europe, distresses me as much as if I were myself an actual sufferer. Count Schmieg has, I flatter myself, considerable influence over the prince, and has frequently remonstrated with him on this subject, but in vain. How often has he solicited, as the only reward of his long and faithful services, the emancipation of

this class of human beings; but hitherto his solicitations have been fruitless. The prince harbours prejudices on this subject which simple friendship is not powerful enough to remove. But from love I expect every thing; and you must yourself feel, my too scrupulous friend, what a glorious deed it would be, to take off with the light hand of love, the yoke which bows the neck of millions; and by blessing posterity yet unborn, transmit your adored name to after ages! What sacrifice ought to be esteemed too great for this? Yet here the obstacle is—the bare conquest of a prejudice!"

"A prejudice!" repeated Charlotte, with a deep sigh. Here the unexpected visit of some strangers interrupting the conversation, she willingly seized the opportunity to withdraw to her own apartment—but with an envenomed arrow in her bosom. The bare listening to such insinuations, even though with silent disapprobation, or vain discussion, was a

proof that her soul was no longer unspotted. It was now deprived by habit of its salutary abhorrence of vice; like the sensitive plant, which loses its faculty of shrinking, from a too great frequency of touch.

Her thoughts were now occupied by the two grand suggestions which the countess had invented, namely, the esteem and wishes of the princess, and the flattering idea of becoming her country's deliverer. In this seducing picture, she likewise introduced her father's *reconciliation*; having often heard him exclaim, "Blessed is that mortal who is destined to be the deliverer of this oppressed class." But Charlotte at length discovered in the back-ground of this picture, the dark shade of a fond and injured husband; and the instant it appeared, her terrified imagination retreated within the bounds of modesty and decorum.

The lurking seducer and his friends were instantly aware of the influence of

this terrific image, and quickly sprung a new mine. For several successive days his highness appeared anxious and embarrassed in Charlotte's presence. He had frequent occasions to whisper something to the countess; and then, in the same instant, to cast such tender and compassionate looks on Charlotte, that she began to apprehend some dreadful calamity, and conjured her friend to relate whatever she knew, if it concerned Fernau.

"I dare not conceal it from you any longer," said the countess, feigning the deepest concern: for the prince has enjoined it upon me as a duty to acquaint you, although I entreated him to save me so painful a task."

"For God's sake, is Fernau dead?"

"Oh no."

"Dangerously ill?"

"No—he is perfectly well; but I fear——"

"What?"

"Did Fernau ever discover symptoms of an idle ambition?"

"He is not without ambition—but why this question?"

"Compose yourself, my dear friend; I must impart to you what will I fear give you much pain:—It should seem, that the favour of the prince, and his sudden exaltation to so honourable and important a post, is more than he has strength of mind to bear. His dormant ambition is awakened; and, sorry am I to say it, it appears to have banished your image from his soul."

"Impossible!"

"That was my opinion too at first; but I have irrefragable proofs."

"I will believe nothing but my own eyes—and perhaps not even them!"

"Then read what baron Heldrungen, who has an estate near the borders, wrote a few days ago to the prince."

Charlotte took the letter with a trembling hand, and read as follows:

"Your highness having always been of opinion that the honour of the throne and that of the nobility were closely connected, I presume to address your highness concerning a matrimonial alliance in my own family. In the course of business I have frequently an opportunity of entertaining the various diplomatic characters at my castle, by which means I have lately become acquainted with Mr. Fernau, minister of legation. His talents and captivating manners have made an indelible impression on my only daughter and sole heiress, whose mental and personal charms appear to have taken him captive in return."

"Impossible!" cried Charlotte, dropping the trembling hand which held the letter.

"I intreat you to read the whole."

Charlotte read on.

"Some days ago, Mr. Fernau requested a private conference with me, which I readily granted; when to my utter astonish-

ment, his object was to solicit the hand of my daughter. I told him, that however highly I valued his merits, yet I could never consent to a family alliance with any but a nobleman; upon which Mr. Fenhan observed, that were this the only objection, he conceived that might be easily obviated: for that your highness having promised him farther promotion, he ventured to suggest that he was not altogether without hope of being raised to that dignity; especially when your highness considered the great obligations you would confer on me, by enabling me to give my daughter to the man whom she so passionately loves. He also mentioned a connexion with a certain parson's daughter; but added, that it needed be no obstacle to the attainment of his wishes, for he was certain she was too much attached to him to become a bar to his felicity—and that he was affluent enough to allow her a provision."

"If I thought it possible—" exclaimed

Charlotte, pressing the letter together in a convulsive agony.

"Read on," said the countess.

Charlotte made another effort.

"I confess to your royal highness, the matter appears to me rather complicated; insomuch that it is only in compliance with the supplications of my daughter, that I entreat your highness to favour me with the particulars; and whether Mr. Fernau is justified in indulging such a hope of royal favour; as I shall then know what line of conduct to pursue."

That the whole of the letter was a fabrication of the count's the reader will easily imagine; but Charlotte—the unsuspecting credulous Charlotte, had perfect faith in every word. She stood lost in a death-like stupor; her frame trembled, and her eye was fixed on the ground. As soon as she had power to think, she reflected that of late Fernau's letters had been brief and cold; and that, for the last fortnight she had received none. In silent agony

she tottered to her own room, where casting herself on the bed, a flood of tears relieved her oppressed heart. The countess judged the poison she had administered to be sufficiently powerful without farther addition, and therefore left it to work.

Fernau, who felt himself highly flattered with the preceding circumstances, was greatly surprised on reaching the place of his destination, to find neither foreign ministers nor the least appearance of business; and still more so, when week succeeded week, without bringing either the minister, or any intelligence. Finally, however, the old count arrived; but continued towards Fernau cold and reserved. Business was now commenced, and prosecuted with spirit and vigour. The private secretary of the count transacted the most essential affairs, while Fernau, who was thrown completely into the back ground, heard from the lips of strangers, what, by the nature of his office, he should have been the first to have known. He

very soon perceived, to his great astonishment, that the old count undertook and executed something more than the bare signing his name. He quickly discovered, with no less surprise, that he was at once a politician, a gentleman, and a man of business, who was in no want of his assistance. The whole appeared to him an inexplicable riddle, whence the only conclusion he could draw with any degree of certainty, was, that count Schmieg had entirely misconceived the minister's character; consoling himself, at the same time, with the idea of there being perhaps some court-animosity or intrigue, which occasioned the minister's strange deportment towards himself. But what (thought he) will be the most prudent line of conduct to adopt in such a delicate affair? Shall I complain of an old man, who has served his country for above fifty years? To me he is unjust—that is certain; but can I presume to compel the prince to judge between him and me? Never!—

Rather will I patiently wait the event, and try whether, by the strictest assiduity, I cannot win his confidence.

Faithfully as he had adhered to this system, he was still unable wholly to dispel the cloud which constantly over-shadowed the old count's visage, whenever he was present. What could be more natural, than for the letters he wrote to Charlotte, to receive a cast from his mental gloom? To inform her of its real cause, or even of its existence, was impossible; for it could only give her needless pain; and yet, while he was writing, he was often obliged to break off abruptly, lest his full heart should overflow: fearing lest he should say too much, he commonly said too little. Still, he continued to write as often as before; and though they had now heard nothing from each other during two months, this was occasioned not by the want of letters, but by the *hands*, through which they passed. Neither had he formed any acquaintance,

either with baron Heldrungen or his lovely daughter; and for this simple reason; because no such persons were in existence.

As soon as Charlotte had again recovered the use of those faculties which terror and surprise had suspended, she doubted the truth of the whole story; she therefore sat down that instant, and wrote Fernau an account of the whole relation; assuring him at the same time, that she did not believe a single syllable of it; but supposed it to be a fabrication of the prince's, who had avowed a passion for her. She concluded her letter, by entreating him for mercy's sake, to answer her instantly —adding, if in person, so much the better. In order to avoid any possible miscarriage of the letter, she entrusted it to the care of an old servant, instead of sending it to the post as usual, with the count's letters. Notwithstanding all these precautions, it never reached the destined

place, and was consequently never answered by Fernau.

Count Schmieg, impelled by an instinct truly diabolical, had made the whole force of the fabrication of baron Heldrungen's letter, to hinge on Fernau's prominent weakness—vanity; by which artifice, Charlotte was the more easily caught in his snares. Had he, for example, charged him with having been hurried away by unbridled passion, it would have been too glaringly inconsistent with his general character, but vanity, *that* was the failing which Charlotte had with pain discovered in him in respect to herself.

Having anxiously waited for some weeks in a tormenting suspense, between hope and fear, without receiving any reply, she began at last to admit the possibility of his serious dereliction of connubial honour; and one day asked the countess what answer the prince had returned to baron Heldrungen. "That Fernau is an unworthy wretch, (answered she,) whose

wife is one of the most deserving of her sex; and that he will never suffer his favour to be made a cloak to such infamy. A signal proof, (added she,) of the refined love his highness bears you. Where is the man, who, situated as he is, would not have gladly profited by so fair an opportunity of freeing himself from such a dangerous rival! But he nobly despises such indirect means, though his soul appears to be consumed by reflecting upon conduct so detestable."

"How so?" asked Charlotte half unconscious that she spoke.

"What can be more natural, (replied the countess,) than for him to be doubly wounded by your coldness towards him? While he merely saw a husband, to whom you felt yourself bound by love and duty, preferred before him, he had the consolation of believing, that had your affections been free, you would not have regarded him with indifference. But now, to see you with a sort of unintelligible

stubborness, hanging on a man, who has himself torn asunder every tie—especially since it is morally impossible, that after infidelity so base, you can feel any affection for him, the prince is now obliged to draw the bitter conclusion, that your heart is averse from him alone: for however circumstances may alter, to *him* you remain unalterably indifferent."

Charlotte made no reply, but unconsciously shook her head, as the countess uttered the last words. An omen so favourable was instantly conveyed to the prince, and naturally revived such hopes in his breast, that when he saw Charlotte again, he ventured on some formal attacks; but which, to his utter disappointment, were no less formally repelled. One grand point, however, appeared to have been gained, (as count Schmieg judiciously observed,) namely, that Charlotte, nevertheless, did not refuse to remain in his company; nor did she even

shun being alone with him." "She struggles no more (said the sly observer,) with *shame*, but only with *shamefacedness*. The one is the quality of the soul, the other a mere physical habit. One may have long ceased to exist, while the other remains only as a guard to decency. I would lay a wager, that Charlotte would rejoice at a convenient opportunity when her *shamefacedness* should be overpowered."

"Granted, (replied his highness,) but what avails it all, unless the opportunity should occur very speedily. If it does not, all our past labours will be eventually lost: for how easily may an accident discover the whole to Fernau, and then we are exposed like a couple of hardened sinners, to the derision of a parson's daughter!"

The count was really terrified at the reproachful tone which accompanied these words. He entreated him to wait but a few days longer, in the full confidence,

that the spark recently discovered in the bosom of Charlotte might, by unremitting assiduity, be fanned into a flame.

It has already been observed, that the venerable old curate, totally uninfluenced by the fear of man, preached solid sense and sound morality to his flock, in direct opposition to certain opinions which he deemed absurd and impious. Thus, for example, he preached, that persons of all religions may be saved, provided their hearts be sincere; with many other sentiments of a like liberal tendency. But this conduct scandalized some of his pious flock, and brought upon himself a severe rebuke from the upper consistory. This honest vicar was not endowed with the common gift of the present day, of preaching in direct opposition to his own sentiments, and dwelling at large on subjects in public, which he ridiculed in private. He was well aware, that by touching on doctrinal points, he was not likely to benefit his little community; and that such par-

tial discussions had a greater tendency to inflame than enlighten. For which reason, he wisely resolved, whenever he entered the pulpit, to confine himself strictly to the letter and spirit of the scriptures. But as he only committed the heads of his discourse to paper, and trusted to the feelings of his heart for the remainder, it happened that some of his very liberal conclusions on disputable points, would occasionally escape him; and as his congregation was not wanting in orthodox spies, every such objectionable expression was caught at with a malicious eagerness; then, torn from all connection with what preceded or followed, was transmitted, accompanied with hypocritical sighs, naked and unmodified, to the capital, to be examined by the light of that lamp which perpetually burns before the grave of sound reason.

One of these complaints having been a few weeks before lodged against the vicar, count Schmieg was of opinion, that if

well managed, it might exactly suit the present purpose. When he received the charges against him from the consistory, he immediately replied to them with his accustomed fearless love of truth; admitting that such expressions might have escaped him, although he must object to their distortion and want of connection. He was, however, willing to allow, that such convictions of private judgment were not proper subjects for public discussion; but yet could not help pointing out to them, that seven parts out of ten of his congregation were the most virtuous and honest men in the world, though instructed by him from their infancy in their respective duties to God and man—a boast which few ministers, and of more orthodox sentiments, would be able to make. He concluded, therefore, by entreating them to appeal to the majority of his flock, whose love and confidence towards him were unbounded.

The president of the consistory happen-

ed to be a man of sense. "The good old vicar's remarks are very just," said he, after perusing the above. "I have myself made inquiries, and am satisfied of his integrity. I think, therefore, we must shew him all the lenity in our power. A mild rebuke, pointing out the impropriety of such conduct, will have more effect than rash severity." The members of the consistory joined in the opinion of the president, and the secretary received orders to transmit the said reprimand to the vicar, when suddenly there arrived an order from the prince in council to the following effect:

"With the highest displeasure we have learnt, that Dr. Wille, vicar of Buchendorf, has violated his duty by the admission of heretical expressions into his sermons; and we, in conformity to our duty, think ourselves bound, not only to prevent the repetition of the like abominable offence, but also to command our consistory to make an example of the said

Wille, vicar, &c. as a warning to all our faithful subjects. And we furthermore command our consistory to investigate the said offence with all possible rigour, and within three days to transmit their judgment of the same to our council, that the same may be signed, sealed, and executed in due form. And we furthermore declare, that any delay or negligence on the part of our consistory will be followed by our most serious displeasure."

The terrified members of the consistory, little suspecting the cause of this unusual severity, had now no alternative, but, in conformity with the ecclesiastical church, to cite the aged vicar to appear personally before them, and after a public reprimand, to degrade him.

His highness having received the sentence of the consistory in due form and order, hastened to the devoted Charlotte to try the efficacy of this last expedient, and entered her apartment without the previous ceremony of being announced. She

sprang up in terror from her seat on seeing the prince in this unaccustomed place.

"I flatter myself, dear madam," said his highness, with an air of the deepest concern, "you will pardon this intrusion, when you are acquainted with its cause. I have been very much distressed, (added he,) for some days past, on account of your father—"

"My father!" interrupted Charlotte, "is he ill?"

"No: but he is on the point of undergoing a severe trial, which is however the consequence of his own imprudence."

His highness now related the leading facts, with such alterations and illustrations as he deemed proper. "I entertained the hope," sighed he, "even to the last, that he might have been calumniated; but he has himself acknowledged the truth of the accusation. I recommended to the consistory to act with all possible lenity, but was answered by remonstrances and expostulations, to which,

by the nature of my situation, I was bound to yield. It was not possible for me to interfere farther in this affair; and I anxiously awaited their sentence. I hold it now in my hand. By this your father is degraded."

"O God! O God!" exclaimed Charlotte, "He must appear in person before the consistory, there to be stripped of his canonicals!"

Charlotte threw herself on a sofa.

"He will never survive it!" cried she, sobbing.

"My heart bleeds for him," said the prince, after a pause, "and yet I can only pity him. The only thing still in my power is the delay of a few days, that you may have time to prepare him for the stroke—that it may not fall too suddenly upon him. I will defer my signature for three days, my dear Charlotte."

"What!" said Charlotte, "is your signature necessary?"

"Surely."

"And without it the sentence is invalid?"

"To be sure."

"And you could be so barbarous as to kill a man by one stroke of your pen, whose life is so irreproachable—and at his age, too?"

"Dearest of women! you agonize me—you pierce my very soul!—but should I be worth your regard, if, for the sake of gratifying my own feelings, I were to violate the most sacred of all duties—that of preserving the religion of my state?"

He said much more on the subject, to increase the agony of the poor sufferer. The severity of his aspect made her tremble. She threw herself at his feet—she wept and supplicated. He raised her up, and while he mingled tears of sympathy with those of the distracted Charlotte, he remained inflexible to his point. "Believe me, dear Charlotte," said he, "my diadem weighs heavy at this moment."

In the conflict of contending emotions,

she cast herself on a sofa. Her tears flowed apace, and the only sound she had power to articulate was, "Alas, my dear unhappy father!"

Never had Charlotte appeared so irresistibly beautiful to him as at this moment. Eagerly gazing on his lovely victim, he scarcely heard the soul-piercing accents in which he spoke.

"Charlotte, (said he at length,) till this moment I knew not the extent of your power! I can refuse you nothing! Compose yourself—your father is saved if you will but——"

"IF I WILL!" repeated she, gasping between hope and despair.

"You ask of me," continued his highness, "the violation of a positive duty, from which nothing under heaven can absolve me. How, most adorable of women! have I vainly strove to lead you to the violation of an imaginary one, from every shadow of which your faithless husband has long set you free. Once more

let me become the supplicator. Let me now obtain from filial love the boon which you so obstinately refused to the most pure and ardent passion;—be *mine*—be mine *alone*, and I will tear the hated sentence in a thousand pieces."

"No—never, never!" said she, mournfully, and again sunk back in speechless agony.

"Never—never!" repeated the prince, bitterly, "is that your final answer?"

Charlotte remained mute.

"'Tis done!" said he, after a short pause. "I have tried all that the fondest love could suggest—nay even offered up my conscience at the shrine of a woman whom heaven seems to have created only for my torment—too late I see my folly. You have rouzed my dormant pride. I am again myself, and justice shall be unimpeded."

"He hastened to a table, and snatching up a pen, had just set it to paper, when Charlotte sobbed with a faint and

scarcely audible voice, " O, for mercy's sake !——"

In a moment the prince lay again prostrate at her feet, suing for mercy in the softest tones of love. He clasped her slender waist—he pressed her to his throbbing heart—he imprinted a thousand burning kisses on her half-bare bosom—her powers of resistance fled ! and when her conciousness again returned, she found herself alone ; THE SENTENCE LAY AT HER FEET IN A THOUSAND PIECES !

The black despair which now overwhelmed her reason, bordered on madness. The night which succeeded was tempestuous, and the rain beat in torrents on her window. She opened it, and found all without dark and horrible, like her own polluted soul. An irresistible impulse hurried her out of the room ; and flying to her sleeping infant, she caught it in her arms in an almost breathless agony, wrapped it in her own dress, precipitated

down stairs, and forcing the terrified porter to open the door, hurried back to her once happy and peaceful dwelling. On reaching the house, she continued knocking till she had awakened Anna, the old maid-servant, to whose care the child had been entrusted. More asleep than awake, she opened the door; but staggered back with affright, exclaiming, "Holy virgin, my mistress!"

Charlotte flew up stairs, and did not stop till she reached her husband's well-nown study, where, by the light of one solitary lamp, she perceived herself encompassed by so many dear and familiar objects. Her suspended faculties in part returned, and she sunk in a flood of tears to the ground. The trembling servant caught the babe in her arms, and would willingly have succoured the wretched mother; but she rejected every aid, and obstinately clinging to the foot of Fernau's writing desk, continued rivetted to the spot where she had fallen.

END OF VOL. II.

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